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From local to regional: Evolution of three multi-use trails in Northeast Iowa

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From local to regional: Evolution of three multi-use trails in Northeast Iowa

by

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"Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome." Arthur Ashe

ABSTRACT

Multi-use trail development in the United States has increased significantly in recent decades. In many communities, trails are recognized as a valuable component of recreation, quality of life amenity, and source of economic development. Many popular trails are located near population centers, feature scenic natural resources, and provide linkage to amenities. Multi-use trails are pathways that connect natural, historic, and cultural resources. Regional trails link multiple communities and often traverse two or more counties. Benefits of trails may include recreation, quality of life, health and wellness, alternative transportation, and economic development. Trails usually originate as local grassroots projects designed for specific community purposes. In Northeast Iowa, three local projects are evolving into a regional trail system whereas others remain as community resources. The central question in this study is why and how did these local trail projects evolve to become regional destination trails? Subquestions include the following: What were the motivations for trails and how did they impact development? How was participation and support developed for these projects? Who were the actors in the process and what actions did they take? What sources of funding were used and how did they impact implementation? What amenities and resources were important for these trails to become regional trails? In this multiple case study, trails investigated include the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail, Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail, and Trout Run Trail. Case descriptions provide a chronological history of each trail's development. Themes in trail development are derived from review of documents and interviews with key participants. Analysis is conducted within each case and across cases. Discussion is presented according to five themes including motivations and uses, participation and support, actors and actions, funding and implementation, and amenities and resources. Summary information is organized according to the study's findings, implications for planning, and recommendations for regional trail planning.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Opening Vignette: Local Treasures

Arriving at the trailhead in Riceville, you visit the Welcome Center to learn about the features of the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail. Bicycling north along the asphalt trail, you pass a railroad viaduct, avenue of trees, butterfly garden, and prairie restoration. Continuing over an historic wrought iron bridge, you travel along a wooded corridor with fields on either side. Near McIntire, you pass Amish farmers loading hay with horse and wagon. Entering a forest of alder trees, you enjoy the cool woodland air. Ahead you hear the muffled swish of towering wind turbines on the state's largest wind farm.

On another occasion, you begin at Balk Park in Cresco, trailhead for the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail. An informational kiosk highlights native vegetation and prairie restoration practices. Traveling along the old rail corridor, you encounter patches of native prairie and scrub woodland. Stopping in Ridgeway, you enjoy a picnic lunch in the trailside park. Passing by dairy and hog farms and corn and soybean fields, you appreciate the diversity of Northeast Iowa's agriculture. An interpretive loop trail explains railroad symbols and signage. In Calmar, you plan an excursion to a recreational lake and nature center.

For a different experience, you plan an excursion along the Trout Run Trail in Decorah. Riding along an old road, you catch views of the Upper Iowa River, limestone outcroppings, and forested bluffs. Inside the levee, you experience the quiet of river and floodplain. Exiting a city park, you travel past the county fairgrounds and industrial area. Crossing under the highway, you follow a stream to a state fish hatchery. Touring the hatchery, you feed trout in the outdoor raceways. Continuing along fields and woodland, you gain elevation as you loop back toward town. In Decorah, you visit the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum to learn about early settlers.

Whether completed in a single trip or in multiple journeys, these are a few of the experiences that may be enjoyed on the multi-use trails of Northeast Iowa. Though not presently connected, these local trails are the beginnings of a regional trail network in

Northeast Iowa featuring a variety of natural, historical, and cultural resources. See Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 for scenes along the trails.

Figure 1.1 Wind turbines along the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail.

Figure 1.2 Farm landscape along the Prairie Farmer Trail.

Figure 1.3 Wooded pathway along the Trout Run Trail.

1.2 Multi-use Trails

Multi-use trail development in the United States has increased significantly in recent decades. Following World War II, the country experienced rapid population and economic growth. Problems of urban sprawl, automobile dependence, and sedentary lifestyles subsequently developed. In the 1970's, interest in environmental protection and healthy living began to emerge. Demand for recreation is based on population, income, leisure time, and preferences while need is reflected in quantity and quality of existing resources (Central Iowa Regional Planning Commission 1972, 6). In various communities, trails are recognized as a valuable recreation resource and community amenity. Any linear corridor on land that provides access for recreation is a trail including backcountry trails, recreational greenways, bike paths, rail-trails, and multi-use trails (Moore and Ross 1998, 71). Greenways are linear open spaces following a natural corridor or along an established right-of-way (Little 1990, 1).

The most popular recreational trails are those that are located near population centers, feature scenic natural resources, and provide linkage to amenities. Multi-use trails are generally non-motorized, multiple use pathways that connect natural, historic, and cultural resources (*Parks and Recreation* 1998, 72). Hard surface trails of asphalt or concrete may be used for walking, running, hiking, biking, inline skating, and cross-country skiing. In a United States Forest Service survey, bicycling, running, and hiking are the most popular outdoor recreation activities (Iowa Department of Transportation 2000, 3). Regional trails link multiple communities and may traverse two or more counties. Tourist-market trails are

defined as trails that attract users from more than ninety miles away whereas the median travel distance for local-market trails is only four to five miles (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources 2000, 13). For tourist trails, the trail is the destination and primary reason people visit the area. During summer, bicycling is the dominant activity on most trails. Many trail systems develop as a collection of local grassroots projects designed for specific community purposes including recreation, nature appreciation, alternative transportation, and health and fitness.

1.3 Trail Benefits

Multi-use trails provide opportunity for various benefits including recreation, health and wellness, alternative transportation, quality of life, and economic development. Obesity and lifestyle related disorders are an increasing problem according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2009). Moderate daily physical activity such as bicycling or walking is recognized as essential to a healthy lifestyle. Trails add to quality of life and are a community amenity. Amenities correlate positively with measures used to gauge economic performance including population change, employment, per capita income, and county income (Otto et al 2007, 4).

Interest and support for trails has increased in recent decades. Release of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission Report in 1962 created public recognition for trails (Moore and Ross 1998, 75). The President's Commission on American Outdoors called for creation of greenways and trails to tie the country together. In *Trails for All Americans*, a report of the National Trails Agenda Project, 155 million people walk for pleasure and 93 million people bicycle (IDOT 2001, 2.1). Trail use on the urban Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle is estimated at over 4,000 users per day while the rural Raccoon River Valley Trail in Iowa has more than 48,000 users annually (IDOT 2001, 2-2). In a 1989 Iowa survey, elements that contribute most to one's enjoyment include landscape variety, presence of water, separation from roadway, and historical markers (IDOT 2001, 2-7). Rails-to-trails mileage has increased nationwide from 1,738 in 1989 to 10,719 in 1999 (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy 2009). Iowa ranks fourth in the nation in number and miles of recreation trails (Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation 2009).

Many communities are using the "Trail Town" model of economic revitalization that places trails as the centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small town revitalization (Rails-To-Trails Conservancy 2009). In rural southwestern Wisconsin, the 32-mile Elroy-Sparta Trail generates more than $1.25 million per year for the towns of Elroy and Sparta. For the Root River State Trail in southeastern Minnesota, tourist spending averages between $25-$39 dollars per day for food, lodging, and transportation (MDNR 2000, 7). In a study of the economic value of Iowa's natural resources, estimates were calculated for multi-use trails greater than five miles in length. Among 57 trails totaling 890 miles, expenditures of $10.9 million were estimated based on 1.4 million users spending $8 each (Otto et al 2007, 30).

According to the Iowa publication, *Implementing Trail-Based Economic Development Programs*, trails can be used to address all three types of economic development strategies: expansion, retention, and attraction of businesses (IDOT 2000, 14). Guiding principles to keep in mind during the planning process include the following. Understand community capacity in providing user services. Identify target markets based on trail characteristics. Determine the community's relationship in the trail hierarchy. Choose trailhead sites based on desired user markets and impacts. Locate trailheads within town boundaries to concentrate economic impacts. Build off existing markets to extend length of stay and encourage repeat visitation. Cultivate partnerships among public agencies and private business to maximize return on investment (IDOT 2000, 4-6). For specialized services in the arts, entertainment, and recreation, Northeast Iowa has a regional and national competitive advantage (Regional Economics and Community Analysis Program 2009).

1.4 Regional Trail Planning

Regional trail systems connect destinations and provide a multi-modal transportation network. Successful trail planning includes building a broad-based citizen coalition, forming a strong partnership with a government agency, and developing a written plan of action (Winterich and Ryan 1993). Another source identifies three stages in regional trail planning: visualizing the plan, developing community partnerships, and implementing the plan (David and Westrup 2002). Visualizing involves identifying trail location, participating agencies, funding sources, and trail design. In the second stage, a coalition is developed among diverse

groups of citizens, potential trail users, and public entities. Implementation addresses funding strategies, construction and operation activities, and maintenance requirements.

The core of trail planning is to satisfy a user's desire for a specific type of trail experience (MDNR 2006, 1.1). For successful tourist-market trails, three important characteristics include high quality natural resources, desirable surface and sufficient length, and community capacity to provide services and experiences for trail users (Iowa Department of Economic Development December 2006). In the article, "Top 10 Tips for Successful Trail Planning," trail design should consider aesthetic, educational, scientific, historical, scenic, and cultural features of interest when incorporating trails into regional plans (David and Westrup 2002).

1.5 Research Problem

Iowa comprises 56,239 square miles with only two percent of natural resources in public ownership and managed by federal, state, county, and city governments. As the population of Iowa becomes more urbanized, residents will demand greater access to natural resources for recreational opportunities. In 2006, 61 percent of the population lived in urban areas with densities of more than 1,000 people per square mile (Otto et al 2007, 3). Iowa ranks 49th in percentage of land that is available for public recreation. River and railroad corridors are among the few areas remaining for public recreation and environmental preservation according to Mark Edwards, Trails Coordinator with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Iowa ranks fourth in number and miles of recreation trails with Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and Michigan containing nearly fifty percent of the nation's trails (INHF 2009). Many trails have been created along abandoned rail lines in these agricultural and industrialized states. See Appendix 1 for a statewide trails inventory.

Statewide trail planning began in 1987 when the Iowa Legislature directed the Iowa Department of Transportation to complete a comprehensive trails plan. Through extensive inventory, analysis, government coordination, and public input, the Statewide Recreational Trails Plan identified corridors of national, state, or regional importance. With 93 percent of land in agricultural use and only 1-2 percent as greenway corridors, trails should be viewed in a broad environmental context (Mark Edwards, personal communication). Completed in

1990 and revised in 2000, the Statewide Recreational Trails Plan proposes 4,908 miles of trails with 517 miles already in place (IDOT 2001, 3-12). See Appendix 2 for the statewide trails vision.

In Iowa, most trail planning and development begins at the local level as grassroots projects in individual communities. Grassroots refers to activity initiated by people in local communities as opposed to organization through political centers and power structures. Contrastingly, trail development in Minnesota has been coordinated by the state through the Department of Natural Resources. The context for trails varies among urban versus rural and public versus private projects. In many instances, trails are initiated by a single individual or small group of people in a community. Partnering with a governmental agency, trail development becomes a public project. Multiple actors with differing objectives may be involved in planning, construction, funding, and maintenance. Trails projects usually seek various sources of funding for implementation.

While many local trail projects remain as individual community amenities, some become part of a regional network, and a few develop into destination trails for tourism and economic development. Local trails serve community needs which may accrue fewer benefits compared to regional trails. For some communities, this may result in reduced returns on infrastructure investment, poor connectivity of resources, economic leakage to adjacent areas, and limited access to public funding. With costs ranging from $200,000-$400,000 per mile, hard surface asphalt or concrete trails are significant infrastructure investments (Lisa Hein, personal communication).

In a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources study of three tourist market trails, Iowa was highest among out-of-state users on all three trails, indicating a leakage of revenue to Minnesota. Existing trails would be best utilized for economic gain if they were incorporated into larger systems capable of drawing visitors from outside the area (IDED March 2006). In Iowa, the 52-mile Cedar Valley Nature Trail connects the cities of Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. This rail-trail serves as a “backbone” that connects 70 miles of local trails and draws users from a multi-state area (IDOT 2000, 4). Tourist-market trails generate economic growth through increased spending to existing businesses, attraction and retention of businesses, and tax revenues.

In Northeast Iowa, most trails have been developed as local projects with specific community objectives. Among ten counties in Northeast Iowa, there were 562 miles in trails with 181 of these being bike trails (Iowa Department of Natural Resources 2001). Many of these trails are located in natural resource and conservation areas. During the past twenty years, interest in developing trails for a broader range of users has intensified. Only a few trails were developed as multi-use trails and paved with limestone screenings. In recent years, hard surface paving with asphalt or concrete has become a priority on select trails. Regional organizations such as Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development are promoting expansion and development of a regional trails system throughout Allamakee, Buchanan, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties.

Three trails of interest include the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail, Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail, and Trout Run Trail. They share a commonality of being multi-use hard surface trails greater than 10 miles in length. Originally conceived as local projects, they are candidates for development into a regional trail system. Each varies according to geographic position, access to natural resources, existing infrastructure, and community capacity. The reasons for their evolutionary development involve multiple factors. Original motivations focused on local recreation whereas tourism and economic development has become a primary objective. Awareness has expanded beyond the realm of individual communities as regional collaboration has increased. The composition and orientation of trail committees has changed throughout each project's duration. Funding sources are diverse and competition has increased for these funds. In rural communities, the cost of trail development is a significant investment in infrastructure. Connection of resources and development of amenities is ongoing in these projects.

Regional trail development is an intensive and complicated process. For rural communities, trail development competes with essential needs and limited financial resources. Local trails are valuable in serving community needs whereas regional trails appeal to users from outside the area. Developing trails as tourist destinations capitalizes on tourism and economic development opportunities. Given a community's initial desire for trails, does the community have sufficient potential to become a tourist destination? Does trail development provide sufficient benefit considering the investment of time, labor, and

capital? What factors enhance evolution of local projects into regional trail systems? These are relevant concerns in regional trail planning for communities in Northeast Iowa.

The central question in this study is why and how did these local trail projects evolve to become regional destination trails? Subquestions are issue and procedural in nature and include the following: What were the motivations and purposes for these trails and how did they impact development? How was public awareness and support developed for these projects? Who were the actors in the planning process and what actions did they take? What sources of funding were used and how did they impact outcomes? What amenities and resources were important for these trails to become regional trails?

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Qualitative Research

The purpose of this study is to describe the process of regional trail development among local trail projects in Northeast Iowa. Regional trails are defined as multi-use trail systems connecting natural, historical, and cultural resources among communities and counties. Trail planning and development is a complex process suited to qualitative research methods.

Qualitative research is conducted when a complex and detailed understanding of an issue is needed (Creswell 2007, 40). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings and attempt to interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people associate with them (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 3). The social, political, and historical context is important to the research. Multiple sources of data are used and the researcher is a key instrument in data collection and analysis. Research procedures in qualitative research are inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience (Creswell 2007, 19). Quantitative measures and statistical analyses may not fully represent the interactions among people and context of the issue (Creswell 2007, 40). As the trails in this study were in development, it was possible to visit the sites, collect information from active participants, and adapt research techniques as appropriate. For a complex process involving multiple issues, qualitative research is most appropriate.

2.2 Case Study Approach

Five recognized approaches to qualitative research include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Narrative research is best for capturing detailed stories or life experiences of a single person or small group (Creswell 2007, 55). Phenomenological research describes the meaning of lived experiences of a phenomenon among several individuals. Grounded theory attempts to generate a theory of a process or action from views of many participants (Creswell 2007, 63). Ethnographic research involves describing and interpreting shared patterns of values and behaviors among a cultural group. Case study seeks to understand an issue illustrated through a specific example. Case study research may use quantitative or qualitative processes and may be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive (Yin 2009, 8). A case study is both a process of inquiry about a case and a

product of the inquiry (Stake 2000, 436). Selection of the approach depends on the research questions, area of focus, unit of analysis, data sources, data analysis, and report structure (Creswell 2007, 78-79). Case studies are appropriate for answering how and why questions for a contemporary set of events (Yin 2009, 13). A case study approach was selected for this study based on the research questions, complexity of the topic, and context of the problem. Exploring the process of regional trail development, this study focused on why and how local projects evolve into a regional trail system.

Each case represents a series of events in context. The strength of case study research is in understanding complex social phenomena among individual, group, organizational, social, and political contexts (Yin 2009, 4). Case study research allows the investigator to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Application of case study methods allows capture of the events, forces, and interactions that result in a particular outcome. Multiple cases may be purposefully selected to show different perspectives, resulting in a collective case study. In this study, three cases are investigated through in-depth, detailed data collection using multiple sources of information. Logic of replication reflects replication of procedures for each case. Analysis consists of descriptive narrative and examination of themes. Reporting includes case descriptions and thematic analysis.

Case study research involves the study of an issue through one or more cases within a bounded system or context (Creswell 2007, 73). Challenges to case study research include which cases to study and what boundaries to implement for each case. Boundaries may be determined according to time, events, or processes (Creswell 2007, 76). Boundaries for cases in this study reflect parameters of process, time, and place. Cases are representative examples of multi-use trail development, temporally active during the past twenty years, and spatially located in Northeast Iowa. The question of whether to study a single case or multiple cases affects the depth of case analysis. Single case design is appropriate when the case is a critical test of existing theory, rare or unique circumstance, representative or typical, revelatory, or longitudinal. Selection of multiple cases allows the researcher to identify different perspectives on the issue and uses the logic of replication (Yin 2009, 54). Though a single case may have been sufficient, a comparative study of three trails may provide greater insight and transferability of the conclusions.

Limitations of case study research include lack of rigor and inability to generalize. Lack of rigor implies that the investigator may not have followed systematic procedures or may have allowed bias to influence findings and conclusions (Yin 2009, 14). Case studies provide little basis for scientific generalization and may be generalized only to theoretical propositions (Yin 2009, 15). Researchers are reluctant to generalize due to differences in context for each case (Creswell 2007, 74). The conclusions of this study pertain to Northeast Iowa and may not be the same for other geographic areas. Other criticisms of case studies are that they take too long, result in large documents, and cannot be adapted to create true experiments to reveal causal relationships. Recognizing these limitations, the lack of recorded and assimilated data from these trail projects precludes a deductive approach. Understanding the complexity of the projects and the value of context, the case study approach was most appropriate for this investigation.

2.3 Case Selection

In Northeast Iowa, multi-use trails are being developed to capitalize on the area's geography and natural resources. Located among similar resources in southeastern Minnesota, the Root River State Trail is that state's most successful multi-use regional trail in terms of tourism and economic development. Three local trails in Northeast Iowa are evolving to become a regional trail system. These trails possess characteristics of tourist market trails with respect to natural resources, surface and length, community capacity, and amenity resources. The projects selected as cases for this study include the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail, Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail, and Trout Run Trail (herein referred to respectively as the WGWLT, PFRT, and TRT).

These projects are appropriate as cases in this study for many reasons. They are instrumental in providing insight into a particular issue, the evolution of local to regional trails in Northeast Iowa (Stake 2000, 437). The trails have common attributes and distinct differences in terms of planning, design, and development. Similarities include physical geography and natural resources, in-process stage of development, and histories ranging between 15-20 years. Started as local projects, they are evolving to become regional destination trails. Located in the same area of the state, the investigator may control for

changes in demographic attributes, cultural backgrounds, political entities, and regional influences. These similarities act as controls on external variables while project differences provide complexity in examining thematic issues associated with multi-use and regional trail development.

The trails were selected according to purposeful sampling techniques as opposed to random sampling. Though balance and variety are important, the opportunity to learn from cases is most important (Stake 2000, 447). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event studied (Creswell 2007, 129). Sampling strategies applied in this study include maximum variation, intensity, and criterion (Miles and Huberman 1994, 28). Maximum variation documents diverse variations and identifies common patterns. In this study, variation occurs in rail-trails versus non-rail trails, linear versus loop trails, rural versus urban projects, and project origins. Intensity reflects an information-rich case that manifests the phenomenon. With development periods of 20, 20 and 15 years, the cases have a rich history involving multiple sources of information. Criterion indicates cases which meet specific requirements. For this study, these include multi-use design, hard surface paving, and minimum 10-mile length. Combination sampling strategies satisfy multiple interests and strengthen the applicability of research findings (Creswell 2007, 127).

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection involves multiple sources of information including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts (Yin 2003, 83). In this study, documents included letters of support, meeting minutes, proposals and grant applications, formal studies, and newspaper articles. Letters of support were written to demonstrate local support for projects in grant applications and include individuals, agencies, and organizations. Meeting minutes reviewed included those of the county board of supervisors and city council to confirm actions taken by governing bodies. Visits to state agencies in Des Moines and Ames were made to access proposals and grant applications for state and federal programs. Agencies included the Iowa Departments of Natural Resources, Economic Development, and Transportation. Formal studies included trail user studies, surveys, and

organizational publications such as the Minnesota Users Study, Impacts of Rail-Trails, and Iowa Trails 2000. Microfiche archives of community newspapers were reviewed in public libraries including the *Calmar Courier, Cresco Times Plain Dealer, Decorah Journal, Decorah Public Opinion, Mitchell County-Press News, and Riceville Recorder*. Field notes were taken and photocopies made from research materials as appropriate.

Archival records included organizational records, maps and charts, and survey data. Organizational records were primarily from the county conservation boards and citizens committees. Maps and charts consisted of trail maps published by the trail committee, supporting organization, or maintaining agency. Survey data featured information from user studies in other locations including the Minnesota State Trail Use and Impacts of Rail-Trails studies. As the selected cases are still in development, no formal user studies have been completed for these trails. Field notes were recorded from these materials.

Interviews are guided conversations and may be in-depth, focused, or formal in design (Yin 2009, 107). They allow the researcher to gain an understanding of participant meaning and perspective on various issues. Interviews included telephone calls and face-to-face visits. For the case studies, a series of nine open-ended questions were asked. Eleven individuals were interviewed, three from the WGWLT and PFRT and five from the TRT. Selection was limited to individuals with extensive knowledge of the entire project. Informal interviews or personal communications were conducted with other individuals to obtain trail related information. These included 17 local, regional, and state agency representatives. See Appendix 3 for the list of general interviewees.

Direct observation involves placing oneself in the setting or environment of the case. One seven-day visit and one-three day visit were made to the study area. A preliminary visit was made to Decorah to assess the worthiness of the topic. During these visits, information was collected from committee members, agency representatives, and governmental officials. Independent research was conducted at county conservation board offices, organization offices, and public libraries. Each trail was explored by bicycle to record observations, take photographs, and gather sensory experiences of the trail. Photographs were taken of trailheads, trail surface, signage, memorials, structures, special features, vegetation, and landscapes. Field notes were taken for the above activities.

Artifacts may be physical or cultural and include buildings and structures, journals and histories, photographs, art and sculpture, memorials, and signage. These items were viewed and notes recorded as appropriate. Structures included trailhead buildings, bridges, and shelters. Journals and histories include trail collections and community documents. Photographs were viewed at trailheads and in grant applications, trail maps, tourism brochures, and newspaper articles. Art and sculpture include trailhead pieces, trailside works, and museum collections. Memorials include a tree avenue, trail benches, and rest stations. Signage includes trail signs, interpretive displays, and mile markers. An online promotional video was available for one trail.

Creation of a data matrix is useful in relaying the breadth of information sources for an information rich case (Creswell 2007, 132). Data sources used in this study included documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts. Specific examples of data sources are listed for each case. See Table 2.1 for a matrix of data sources for the respective trails.

Principles important in data collection include using multiple sources, creation of a case study database, and maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin 2009, 98). Using multiple sources promotes converging lines of inquiry, triangulation, and corroboration ((Yin 2009, 115). The case study database includes field notes, documents, publications, and case descriptions. A chain of evidence allows an external observer to trace the derivation of evidence from initial questions to final conclusions and is important in establishing reliability. Data from all sources, primary and secondary, was integrated to compile a case description. They explain how the trails came into being and feature current state, geography, origin, development, and amenities. Each description is written as a chronological narrative to highlight influences and directions in trail planning and development.

2.5 Participant Interviews

Two major types of interviews include structured and unstructured. Structured interviews ask respondents the same series of questions with a set of limited response categories (Fontana and Frey 2000, 649). Unstructured interviews are generally informal, open-ended, and in-depth for qualitative research. Participant interviews in this study featured a series of

Table 2.1 Data Sources

Data Source	WGWLT	PFRT	TRT
Documents			
Letters	letters of support	letters of support	letters of support
Minutes	board of supervisors	board of supervisors	city council
Proposals	grant applications	grant applications	grant applications
Formal studies	Iowa Trails 2000	Iowa Trails 2000	Iowa Trails 2000
Newspaper articles	*Riceville Recorder, Mitchell Co. Press-News*	*Cresco Times Plain Dealer, Calmar Courier*	*Decorah Journal, Decorah Public Opinion*
Archival Records			
Organizational records	county conservation board	county conservation board	Trails of Winneshiek
Maps and charts	trail maps	trail maps	trail maps
Survey data	Minnesota users study, The Impacts of Rail-Trails	Minnesota users study, The Impacts of Rail-Trails	Minnesota users study
Interviews			
Case interviews (11)	citizens, agencies, officials	citizens, agencies, officials	citizens, agencies, officials
General interviews (17)	citizens, agencies, officials	citizens, agencies, officials	citizens, agencies, officials
Direct Observations			
Personal visits	July, October	July, October	March, July, October
Trail experience	Riceville to Bailey	Calmar to Cresco	completed segments
Physical Artifacts			
Structures	pioneer church, bridges	railroad depot, Balk Park	bridges, hatchery complex
Community histories	Riceville sesquicentennial	Calmar history	
Photographs	Great Places application		TOW website
Art and sculpture	Kimball collection	Balk Park, City of Cresco	commissioned works
Memorials	Memory Lane, benches	benches, shelter	
Signage	trail signs	trail and interpretive signs	trail and interpretive signs
Audio-video			website DVD

nine open-ended questions. Interview responses were hand recorded and compiled into an electronic document. In summarizing the data, interviewees were assigned a respondent number to provide anonymity. A total of eleven interviews were conducted, three for the WGWLT and PFRT and five for the TRT. Selection of interviewees was limited to individuals with extensive knowledge of the project's history and development.

The reason for conducting interviews was to collect data from individuals directly involved and to triangulate with other data sources. As the trails have been in development

for many years, the interviews provide historical and contemporary perspectives on the process. For each case, people were available who had extensive knowledge of the trail's development. Individuals were selected with respect to their role, position, and availability. These included trail committee members, county conservation board directors, agency representatives, and government officials. In each interview, a series of nine questions were asked with follow-up questions according to response. Questions addressed the process of trail origin, planning, and development. Interviews were conducted via telephone calls and face-to-face visits. Calls were made from Ames and the study area while visits were made in interviewee offices. They were conducted during the months of June and July of 2009. Case interviews were conducted in confidentiality and names of interviewees withheld in case descriptions. See Appendix 4 for the interview protocol, Appendix 5 for the list of case interviewees, and Appendix 6 for the participant interview data.

Interview questions used in this study include the following.

- *What is the history/timeline of the trail's development?*
- *What was the primary motivation/purpose for creating the trail?*
- *What strategy was used to develop awareness for the trail's development?*
- *What influences - people, organizations, and events - affected planning of the trail?*
- *What were the major sources of support and opposition for the trail?*
- *How does what exists today differ from the original vision or physical plan for the trail?*
- *How do you measure the trail's success?*
- *What written documentation/plan exists for the trail?*
- *Who would you recommend for further information regarding the trail?*

Limitations of interviews include bias, poor recall, and inaccurate articulation among interviewees (Yin 2009, 108). Bias reflects the subjective opinion of the interviewee and influences what they choose to reveal or omit. Poor recall occurs as time and distance separate the interviewee from a recollection of the chain of events and reasoning. Inaccurate articulation may result due to language barrier, education level, and miscommunication in question and response and between interviewer and interviewee.

2.6 Data Analysis

In data analysis, separate pieces of information are organized in ways that provide meaning and understanding. Analysis in qualitative research is inductive, emerging, and establishes patterns and themes (Creswell 2007, 37). The conceptual model of the data analysis spiral is useful in explaining the process (Creswell 2007, 151). In this model, procedures include data managing, reading and memoing, describing-classifying-interpreting, and representing and visualizing. See Figure 2.1 for the data analysis spiral.

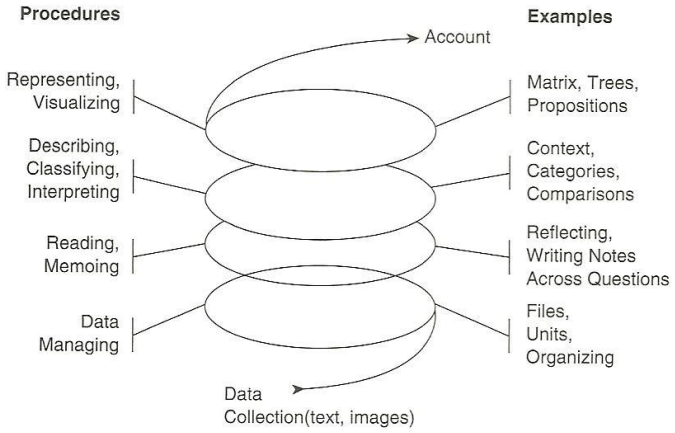

Figure 2.1 The Data Analysis Spiral. Source: *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 2007.

Data managing began with creating and organizing data files. As field notes, documents, and research materials were collected, they were organized into a filing system according to specific case or general topic. Reading and memoing entailed repeated reading and reflection of the data, making margin notes and marking important elements, creating summary lists of thoughts and ideas, and forming initial codes. Coding involves assigning labels to the data items and organizing into clusters, aggregates, and patterns. Collapsing these into broader levels of abstraction, one derives primary themes in the data. According to Creswell, this process represents categorization of instances from the data anticipating emergence of issue relevant meanings (Creswell 2007, 163).

Describing presents details of each case through a chronological narrative incorporating data points, context, and timing. These are essentially the facts of the case. Classifying consists of condensing codes into themes or dimensions of information. Interpreting involves

making sense of the data through direct interpretation and naturalistic generalizations. Direct interpretation examines a single instance and draws meaning from it. It is a process of pulling the data pieces apart and putting them back together in meaningful ways (Stake 1995). Naturalistic generalizations are what people can learn from the case and apply to other cases, the lessons learned and transferability. Representing and visualizing is the presentation of data through text, figures, and tables. In this study, detailed case descriptions represent the facts and analysis is presented through discussion and word tables. The report structure is essentially a substantive case report providing introduction of the problem, description of the context and processes observed, specific elements studied, and outcomes of the inquiry or lessons learned (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Creswell 2007, 196).

Strategies for data analysis include reliance on theoretical propositions that led to the case study, development of a descriptive framework for organizing the case study, use of qualitative and quantitative data, and examination of rival explanations (Yin 2009, 130-34). Among multiple cases, a common analytic strategy is to provide detailed description of each case, themes within the case, and thematic analysis across the cases (Creswell 2007, 163). Analytic techniques may include pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis (Yin 2009, 126). Cross-case analysis is specific to multiple case studies and may involve word tables that display data from individual cases according to a uniform framework (Yin 2009, 156). In this study, the primary analysis strategy features a descriptive framework for case organization and thematic analysis within and across cases as the analytic technique.

Descriptions feature each case's current state, geography, origin, development, and amenities. These categories were selected rather than themes to present a complete and detailed account of the chronology in each case. Through experiential and contextual accounts, the researcher assists readers in the construction of knowledge and meaning (Stake 2000, 442). Following description of the individual cases, analysis and interpretation was organized around major themes. These include motivations and uses, participation and support, actors and actions, funding and implementation, and amenities and resources. Themes were examined within the case and across cases to highlight similarities and

differences. Word tables were created to display the data according to thematic components and individual cases.

CHAPTER 3: CASE DESCRIPTIONS

3.1 Project Study Area

The focus of this study is why and how these local trail projects evolve to become regional destination trails. Regional trails are defined as multi-use trail systems connecting natural, historical, and cultural resources among communities and counties. The reasons for selecting Northeast Iowa for this study are elaborated below.

The geology and geography of Northeast Iowa is unique from the rest of the state. During the Wisconsinan glacial period 10,500 years ago, portions of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin escaped glaciation, resulting in the Paleozoic Plateau (MDNR 2009; Prior 1991, 20). Commonly referred to as the "driftless" area, the landscape includes hills, valleys, rivers, streams, outcroppings, and bluffs (Driftless Area Initiative 2009). Natural resources of topography, water, vegetation, and wildlife make it a popular recreational area. The Upper Iowa River begins in southeastern Minnesota and flows through Howard, Winneshiek, and Allamakee counties in Iowa before entering the Mississippi River. It is Iowa's only river eligible for designation as a national wild and scenic river (IDNR 2009).

In the Statewide Recreational Trail Plan completed by the Iowa Department of Transportation in 1990, natural corridors of statewide significance were identified. With 97 percent of Iowa's land in private ownership, little public land is available for recreational development. Existing river, railroad, and utility corridors offer the greatest opportunity for public recreation and natural resource preservation. River corridors and adjacent lands provide multiple benefits including resource protection, wildlife habitat, open space, and recreational greenways. In the plan, many of these corridors were recommended as potential locations for trail development.

Political and organizational boundaries also define the study area. Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, a nonprofit organization of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, serves Allamakee, Buchanan, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties. The Northeast Iowa Tourism Association markets the natural, historic, and cultural resources of these same counties to Iowa, Chicago, and Minneapolis (Northeast

Iowa Tourism Association 2009). The Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, one of 18 regional councils of government in the state, services Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties. See Appendix 7 for a map of the project study area.

Trail development in Northeast Iowa consists mostly of local trails with a few being developed into regional trails. The three cases selected for this study are multi-use hard surface recreational trails in Howard, Mitchell, and Winneshiek counties. The following case descriptions feature each trail's current state, geography, origin, development, and amenities. Data from primary and secondary sources are integrated into the chronological narrative for each case.

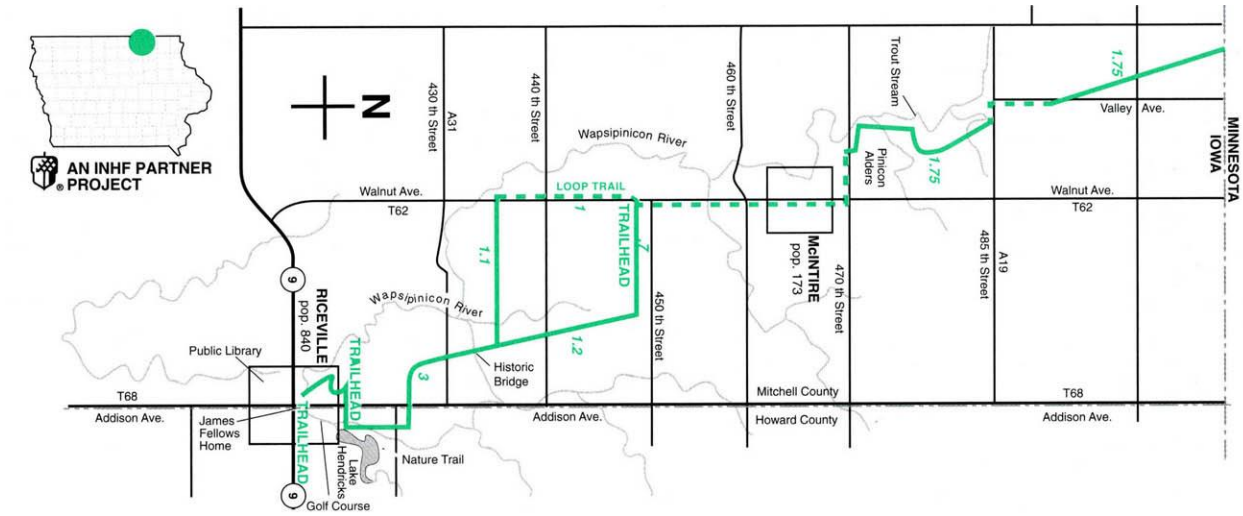

Figure 3.1 Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail map.
Source: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, http://www.inhf.org/iowatrails/wapsi-2001map-printable.htm.

3.2 Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail (WGWLT)

Current State

The Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail (WGWLT) is located in the Wapsipinicon River Corridor along the abandoned rail bed of the Chicago Great Western Railroad in Howard and Mitchell counties. The 29-mile trail, with asphalt and crushed limestone surfaces, extends 13.5 miles south from Riceville to Elma and 15.5 miles north through McIntire to the Minnesota state line (IDED April 2008). Populations of the three communities connected by the trail are Elma 598, McIntire 173, and Riceville 840 (United States Census Bureau 2009).

Landscape features include farm fields, prairie remnants, wetlands, and woodlands. Trailheads include the pioneer church Welcome Center in Riceville and an historic railroad depot in Elma. The trail connects to the four-mile Old Roundhouse Trail in Elma. Four additional miles in Minnesota extending to the Shooting Star Trail at Taopi are planned for a combined total of 33 miles (INHF 2009). Completion will result in the first interstate trail connection between Iowa and Minnesota. See Figure 3.1 and Appendix 8 for a map of the trail.

Geography

The Welcome Center and primary trailhead is located off Iowa Highway 9 in Riceville. The Welcome Center is an historic church building featuring information, exhibits, and facilities. Traveling north, the trail passes over a restored railroad viaduct, through an avenue of memorial trees called Memory Lane, and beside a butterfly garden. Connecting to Lake Hendricks recreational area and campground, the trail continues to Prairie Visions, a 1.3 acre prairie restoration. Further along is an historic pinned Pratt through truss bridge, relocated to the trail from the town of Stacyville (IDED April 2008). A loop trail allows users to follow the rail bed or explore a wetland boardwalk. The trail shares a county road for two miles among Old Order Amish and Mennonite farms to the town of McIntire. The trail enters Pinicon Alders State Preserve, a 320-acre rare plant community of hazelnut and alder trees. Passing by fields and pasture, the landscape is accented by gigantic blades and towers of the Horizon Wind Farm. The trail surface changes from asphalt to crushed limestone near the Minnesota state line. South from the trailhead in Riceville, seven miles of trail are being developed to the former town of Acme. The paved trail resumes southeast of Acme through fields and wetlands to Elma. An historic railroad depot serves as the second trailhead. See Figures 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 for views along the trail.

Figure 3.2 Welcome Center and Trailhead in Riceville.

Figure 3.3 Observation deck at Prairie Visions restoration.

Figure 3.4 Pinicon Alders State Preserve north of McIntire.

Origin

The last train of the Chicago Great Western Railroad traveled through Riceville in 1980. According to a committee member, the line was abandoned in 1989 as it was no longer profitable. The railroad connected St. Paul, Minnesota with Chicago, Illinois and Kansas City, Missouri. Genesis for the trail began in 1990 as Elaine Govern, a local businesswoman observed Lloyd Jennison walking along the abandoned railroad bed (Cross 2005, 137). Retired from farming, he was walking to enjoy nature and its pleasures. Many other residents had fond memories of walks along the rail bed. Residents were particularly interested in preserving native prairie, wildlife habitat, and personal memories. Govern discussed the idea with friends to develop community support. In February 1990, the Iowa Department of Transportation issued a Statewide Recreational Trails Plan in which the Wapsipinicon River Corridor was designated because of river and railroad assets and potential connectivity with the Minnesota trails system (IDOT 2001). Following release of this plan, advocates envisioned a trail connecting southeast to trails in Cedar Rapids and north to the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota (interview with committee member). Milton Owen, Mitchell County Conservation Board Director was contacted about the possibilities for trail development.

In August 1990, a public meeting was held at the public library to discuss the trail and form a local committee. The result was an informal organization called the Wapsi-Great Western Trail Citizens Committee. Membership consisted of local residents interested in assisting county conservation boards to secure the railroad right-of-way. Committee activities included landowner contacts, fundraising, public relations, grant writing, brush clearing, and trail construction (interview with committee member). The committee presently includes 20-25 members and 20-25 supporters. Volunteers have contributed more than 30,000 hours and

$59,000 to the trail project in its 20-year history (IDED April 2008). Local fundraising has included breakfasts, dinners, raffles, silent auction, special sales, exhibits, trail rides, and entertainment events. Many people have been involved for various reasons including a common bond of friendship, desire to be supportive, and for the greater good said a committee member.

As new members joined the committee, the number of trail enhancement projects increased. Planning expanded to include historical sites, nature preservation, economic development, and connection to the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota (IDED April 2008). A trail corridor to connect with the Minnesota trail system had been identified in the 1990 Statewide Recreational Trails Plan. Along the trail are benches, plants, and trees donated as memorials and gifts by local residents. Memory Lane is an avenue of memorial trees with hand-made concrete plaques. The trailhead Welcome Center in Riceville features flagpoles, signage, lighting, and landscaping. Most of the materials and labor were provided by area residents at no charge. The trail committee received the Governor's Good Neighbor Award in 1991 from the Iowa Community Betterment Program (Cross 2005, 138). The Riceville Future Farmers of America presented a Building Our American Communities Award to the committee for "outstanding service in making our community a better place in which to live and work."

The original railroad bed had been purchased as fee simple title with no reversionary rights to the former landowners. Following abandonment, some parcels along the railroad right-of-way were sold. The committee contacted landowners to secure the trail alignment through purchase or easement. Where parcels were not available, alternative trail routes were explored to avoid conflict (interview with committee member). In August 1990, the Mitchell County Board of Supervisors met to discuss the future of the railroad right-of-way. A pheasant hunting organization and the trail committee had expressed interest in the railroad property south of McIntire. The supervisors passed a resolution in favor of conservation and public recreation including establishment of a hiking and biking trail (*Riceville Recorder*, November 29, 1990). The Mitchell County Resource Enhancement and Protection Committee approved the trail project as a priority, permitting application for state assistance in acquisition and development (*Riceville Recorder*, August 30, 1990).

Friends of the trail committee paid the back taxes of certain parcels and transferred title to Mitchell County. “This represents the best in grass-roots activity,” said a committee member. To avoid prolonged conflict in securing the right-of-way, the Howard County Board of Supervisors invited adjacent landowners to a meeting and obtained title in a single resolution. Howard Chapman, Howard County Conservation Board Director, applied for and received a State Regional Enhancement grant. Funds were used for a crushed limestone surfacing project on five miles of trail from Acme to Elma. A contest was held to develop a trail logo and a local student was selected as the winner (*Riceville Recorder*, November 15, 1990).

Public support was relatively strong across the county and in Riceville. “The trail is not a government trail; it is a community derived idea and project,” according to an agency representative. However, some people did not see the need for a trail coming through their backyard or for local government spending money on it. Trail opposition included “not in my back yard” issues, fears of vandalism, litter, noise, and loss of hunting access. The town of McIntire, an Old Order Amish community, decided not to allow the trail to pass through the city corporate boundaries as they were not informed of the route in advance (*Riceville Recorder*, January 17, 1991). The mayor of McIntire was a vocal opponent. One committee member stated that greater sensitivity is needed in Old Order Amish and Mennonite communities regarding land valuation, trail alignment, and cultural traditions. The reason is due to their physical dependency upon location and adjacency of land resources to maintain their livelihood.

At a public meeting in November 1990, concerns arose among landowners regarding property condemnation. Members of the trail committee indicated that land would not be condemned for the trail. In addition, no county tax revenues would be used for land acquisition or trail development. Fears of vandalism, littering, and noise were raised and trail proponents said that such problems are rare on multi-use trails (*Riceville Recorder*, January 10, 1991). From the comments expressed at this meeting, application for grant funding was postponed. South of Riceville, a few landowners feared that their land would be condemned to build the trail. A meeting was held to allay these fears and confirm that all land purchases would be voluntary. As a general policy, the committee did not seek opposition and sought

alternatives with respect to trail alignment explained a committee member. According to state law, condemnation is not allowed to acquire land designated for trails (interview with agency representative). In 2006, the Mitchell County Conservation Board assigned an employee to work with citizens in McIntire to resolve any misunderstandings.

Development

The first section of trail developed was from Riceville to Lake Hendricks, a 234-acre public recreational area with a 50-acre lake and the largest county-owned campground in Northeast Iowa (IDED April 2008). According to an agency representative, this represented the greatest immediate need. A Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant was applied for in February 1991. The application was submitted by the city rather than the county due to intense competition among counties for these funds. Ranking tenth among 70 applications, the request was not funded due to a state budget shortfall (Kershner 1991). "We knew we had a worthwhile project because of the high rating of the REAP grant application," said Elaine Govern. Shortly thereafter, a $6,000 anonymous endowment was made to purchase land for establishment of a trailhead in Riceville.

A State Recreational Trails grant in the amount of $126,515 was awarded for 10.5 miles of trail construction north of Riceville in September 1991 (Becker 1991). Reasons for developing the trail included a safe route for travel to and from Lake Hendricks, recreation for Riceville residents, preservation of native prairie and wildlife habitat, preservation of local history and railroad elements, and community economic development. Creation of the trail completes a need identified in the 1980 Mitchell County Comprehensive Plan: "Bike paths and trails will give younger residents access to opportunities already existing…recreational needs will be met, while increasing the use and efficiency of existing facilities" (Kershner 1991).

Volunteers have completed a variety of improvements to the trail. The viaduct bridge was replaced and the first natural amenity, a butterfly garden, was established in 1992. A public relations event was held on October 3, 1992, National Rails-to-Trails Day, with the theme, "Discover the New World of recreation and nature" (*Riceville Recorder*, October 8, 1992). In 1993, the Minnesota Legislature approved a resolution to connect the Bluff Country trail system to the WGWLT (interview with committee member). The Shooting Star Trail is a

nine-mile paved trail extending from Taopi to LeRoy and passes through Lake Louise State Park (MDNR 2009). This trail connection would be the first between Iowa and Minnesota and a source of pride and accomplishment for the respective communities. A Federal Recreational Trails grant of $34,640 was awarded for acquisition of 2.5 miles of railroad right-of-way and $26,282 for bridge installation.

A State Recreational Trails grant was awarded in 1994 for acquisition and construction of 3.5 miles of trail from Pinicon Alders to the Minnesota state line. Pinicon Alders is a 320-acre nature preserve of upland woodland featuring alder, hazelnut, prairie orchid, and sphagnum moss (Mitchell County Conservation Board 2009). In 1995, a $350,000 grant was received from the National Historic Preservation program to move an historic pioneer church for use as a trail visitor's center (interview with committee member). Two historic bridges were used along the trail including an 1887 pinned Pratt through truss bridge that spanned the Little Cedar River southeast of Stacyville. These structures were the mainstay for early pioneer roads (INHF 2009).

A Resource Enhancement and Protection grant of $31,350 was awarded in 1996 to purchase a 1.3-acre automobile dump area and restore it to native prairie (IDNR 1996). The restoration will serve as an outdoor classroom for students and trail users. "We hope this will be a drawing card for tourism," said Elaine Govern (*Riceville Recorder,* October 31, 1996). Volunteers started 4,400 prairie plants from seed and planted them on the site called Prairie Visions. A fieldstone observation deck was built by volunteers in 2000. With assistance from Trees Forever and the Riceville Future Farmers of America, trees were planted along the trail (interview with committee member). In August 1996, a trail loop was completed through a wetland area featuring a plank boardwalk for access.

In 1996 and 1997, Federal Regional Enhancement funds of $126,800 and $49,600 were received for the Welcome Center. The Riceville Baptist Church, built in 1858, was being considered for use as a trail visitor's center (interview with committee member). The structure was evaluated by the State Department of Historical Preservation to determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Eligibility was approved as it was the first pioneer church in Riceville, representative of the era, and the Rice family for which the town is named was instrumental in its establishment. The church was closed in 1994 due to

declining membership and purchased by the trail committee in 1996 for $18,000 (*Riceville Recorder*, December 26, 1996). It was moved to the site in 2002, various improvements completed, and dedicated in 2005. The dedication featured two days of activities including a barn photo exhibit, dramatic performance on Iowa artist Grant Wood, and trail walk (Cross 2005, 141). The building houses paintings and sculptures by Isabel Moore Kimball and the Glenn Crossman fossil and mineral collection.

Federal Regional Enhancement funds were received in 1999 and 2003, $128,000 and $194,400 respectively, for various infrastructure improvements. A federal earmark sponsored by Congressman Tom Latham was approved in 2005 for $2.3 million dollars. "This is a great recreational project that showcases some of the most beautiful areas of our state. It will add a wonderful new option for Iowans, as well as visitors to our state, who are looking for recreation opportunities," said Latham (Iowa Trails Council 2009). Stan Walk, a member of the Mitchell County Board of Supervisors, worked on securing this earmark. An agency representative stated the following: "The powers that be realized that the trail had to be paved and go somewhere. Going somewhere meant connecting communities and having an end destination." Grant funds and the federal earmark made paving possible. Through a Federal Regional Enhancement grant of $296,000, 4.5 more miles of the trail were asphalted in 2007. The town of Riceville applied unsuccessfully for an Iowa Great Places designation, one that would have provided funding for a variety of community enhancements. In the same year, the Mitchell County Conservation Board hired a Special Projects Coordinator to assist the board and trail committee.

In 2008, a $1.3 million Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism grant was awarded for completion of land acquisition and easements, bridges and parking, and trail amenities. The grant application, "Wapsi-Great Western Line Project: Connecting the Past and the Present to Build the Future," sought to complete the trail in an effort to reap benefits from tourism and economic development. Quarterly public meetings were held over a period of three years to plan for this project phase (IDED April 2008). A $570,000 federal earmark was submitted in 2008 but has not been appropriated by Congress. A maintenance agreement was signed by the Howard and Mitchell County Conservation Boards to maintain the trail. Costs to maintain the trail are estimated at $30,000 per year, based on a statewide

average maintenance cost per mile (IDOT 2001). According to a committee member, development of the recreational trail has been a step by step process. See Figures 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7 for trail features.

Figure 3.5 A Pratt through truss bridge relocated to the trail.

Figure 3.6 An Amish farmstead near McIntire.

Figure 3.7 A wetland boardwalk completes the loop trail.

Amenities

Amenities of the WGWLT include nature, history, art, culture, and technology. Natural resources include a butterfly garden, native prairie, farm fields, wetlands, and woodlands. Pinicon Alders State Preserve is a 320-acre forest of hazelnut and alder. Lake Hendricks is a 234-acre recreational area featuring a 50-acre lake, 200 campsites, and nature trail (Howard County Conservation Board 2009). Lylah's Marsh is a 140-acre wetland northwest of Elma. History is celebrated through the railroad, pioneer church, truss bridges, Rossiter Photo Gallery, James Fellows Home, and Glenn Crossman fossil collection. The pioneer church is on the National Register of Historic Places and serves as a trail Welcome Center. South of McIntire, a kiosk will mark the Bosteter Farm, hideout of Chicago gangster Pretty Boy Floyd. Art elements consist of fine art pieces, Isabel Moore Kimball paintings and sculptures, Brown Opera Block stage curtain paintings, and fieldstone art. The five stage curtain paintings were preserved with a National Endowment for the Arts grant. An entrance sign made of metal corn planter plates featuring words from the state song, "Iowa, Oh Iowa," is planned for the northern trailhead near the Minnesota border.

Culture abounds in Old Order Amish and Mennonite communities, Old Acme Store, and Cedar Valley Produce Auction, the largest produce auction house in Iowa. Farmer's markets in Riceville and Elma promote local food with Howard County having the first countywide system in the state. Permanent infrastructure is being developed for the farmer's market in

Riceville. Alternative energy technology is represented in the 182 turbines of the Horizon Wind Farm (IDED April 2008). Annual events include a Fourth of July celebration at Lake Hendricks, Old Roundhouse Trail Days in Elma, and the Wapsipinicon Festival in Riceville. Present in many amenities is the commitment of the trail committee and local community. Located at the headwaters of the Wapsipinicon River, the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail is a celebration of nature, history, culture, and rural Iowa.

> *Some of the best streams of all are the small farmland rivers. Modest places, rarely spectacular, but lending a measure of freedom and wilderness to landscapes that are parts of our Midwest…humid regions that are intensely cultivated…such streams are some of the best escape routes from the soul-bruising press of modern living. John Madson, "A Plague on All Your Rivers," Audubon, September 1972.*

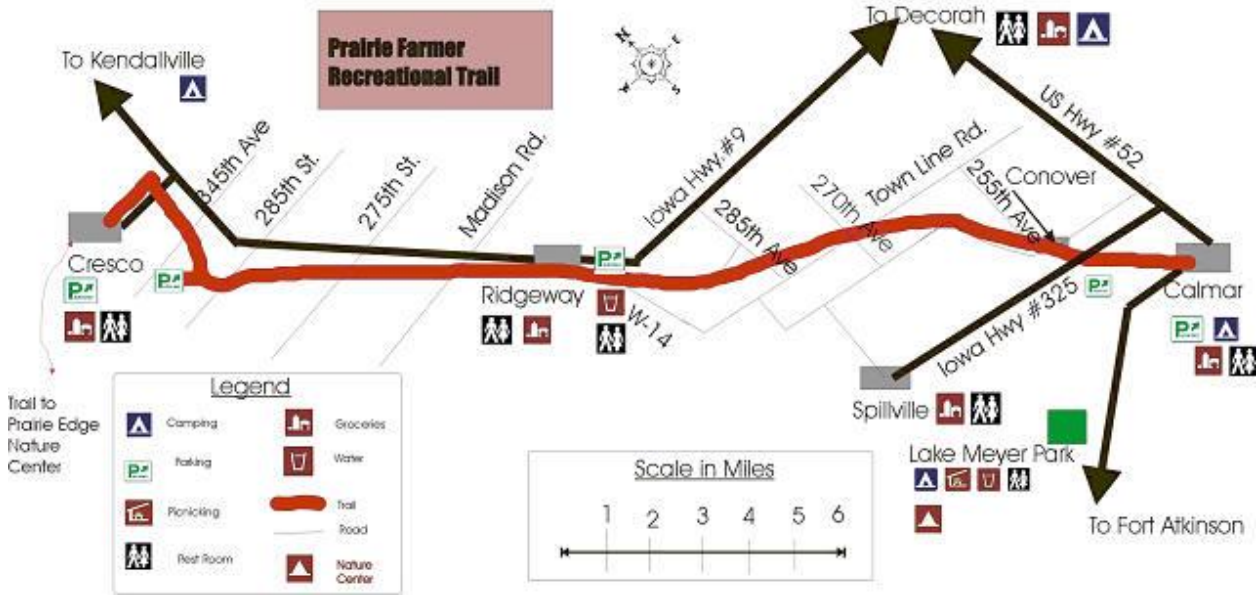

Figure 3.8 Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail map.
Source: Winneshiek County Conservation Board, http://www.winneshiekcounty.org/winncon/rec_trails.htm.

3.3 Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail (PFRT)

Current State

The Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail (PFRT) is named after a former Midwest radio show and follows the abandoned Milwaukee Road railroad line in Howard and Winneshiek counties. The 20-mile crushed limestone trail opened in 1992 and was asphalted in 2008-

2009. Populations of the three communities along the trail are Calmar 1058, Ridgeway 293, and Cresco 3905 (United States Census Bureau 2000). The landscape includes rolling fields and native prairie with small patches of woodland containing elm, sumac, box elder, and oak along its 100-foot right-of-way (INHF 2009). The trail follows the watershed boundary of the Upper Iowa and Turkey Rivers for a portion of its length (IDNR REAP 2006). In the city of Cresco, the trail connects with the three-mile Prairie Springs Recreational Trail. In 2000, the PFRT was designated a Community Millennium Trail by the White House Millennium Council in support of the theme, "Honor the Past – Imagine the Future" (IDED December 2006). Due to its central location and extensive length, the PFRT could be the backbone for a regional trails system in Northeast Iowa. See Figure 3.8 and Appendix 9 for a map of the trail.

Geography

The Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail begins at the historic railroad depot in Calmar. The trail travels northwest along the existing rail bed passing along fields and woodlands. Topography is relatively flat along the rail bed and watershed ridgeline. An interpretive loop constructed by a Boy Scout troop highlights railroad signage. With the exception of its passage through the towns of Ridgeway and Cresco, the trail follows the abandoned rail bed for its entirety. Common sights include dairy and livestock farms among fields of corn, soybeans, and forages. In Ridgeway, the trail ends at Trailside Park requiring travel along city streets. At the northwest edge of town, the trail resumes following close to Iowa Highway 9. Seven miles northwest from Ridgeway, the trail crosses the boundary between Winneshiek and Howard counties. For the next 2.5 miles, a concrete pathway follows the highway into Cresco. Meandering along city streets, the trail terminates at the trailhead in Balk Park. A spur west of the trailhead connects to the Howard County Fairgrounds. South of Iowa Highway 9, connection is made to the Prairie Springs Recreational Trail. This three-mile trail featuring rolling fields, native prairie, and deciduous forest connects to Prairie's Edge Nature Center and Turkey River Campground in Vernon Springs Park. See Figures 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11 for sights along the trail.

Figure 3.9 Interpretive loop of railroad signage near Calmar.

Figure 3.10 Crop fields adjacent to the trail.

Figure 3.11 The rest area at the railroad depot in Calmar.

Origin

The railroad line dates from 1866 when the McGregor Western Railroad Company completed the route from McGregor to Cresco. In 1869, the route from Calmar to Nora Springs was finished (IDED December 2006). The line from Calmar to Lime Springs was abandoned in 1978 which included the alignment of the future trail. Rail-to-trail development was in progress in Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, and Waterloo. The Winneshiek County Conservation Board Director was familiar with the Elroy-Sparta State Trail in Wisconsin and the multi-use corridor along the Shell Rock River in north central Iowa. The railroad went bankrupt and reorganized as the Chicago Milwaukee Corporation (CMC). Adjacent landowners in Howard County bought various parcels while others claimed reversionary rights. The railroad had purchased the land and held a quitclaim deed. In 1984, Winneshiek County entered a bid for all railroad right-of-way parcels within their jurisdiction while individual landowners also placed bids (interview with agency representative). CMC accepted the county's bid as it was easier to deal with one entity rather than multiple individuals. Landowners contested the transaction and filed a lawsuit against the county. County supervisors and the Farm Bureau were opposed to the trail. "It was a county versus private lands issue," said an agency representative. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation researched the deeds to determine if the county's purchase could be defended in court. The case was finally settled in favor of the county (interview with agency representative).

In the late 1980's, the Iowa Department of Transportation formed a trails advisory board. Natural corridors of statewide and regional significance were identified including the Milwaukee Road Railroad corridor. The Winneshiek County Conservation Board was interested in trails primarily as a recreational resource with ecological and economic

considerations secondary (interview with agency representative). Planning began on a recreational trail in 1990. A contest was held through a Des Moines radio station to select a name for the trail. The name chosen by the county conservation board was "Prairie Farmer" from a former radio program in the Midwest. Sebastian Kuhn of Lisle, Illinois, a former resident of Calmar, wrote the following in his winning submission: "Many farmers, in days gone by, used to listen to the Prairie Farmer station. I think the proposed recreational trail might be named the Prairie Farmer Trail" (IDED December 2006).

An informal committee called the Prairie Farmer Advisory Group was formed. Given opposition to the trail, members were selectively invited to participate to ensure support for the project. Information was not made public until absolutely necessary as an early public meeting had provoked a great deal of controversy according to an agency representative. "Once built, trails are accepted, even liked. It's no different from the construction of a gravel road. Landowners are generally not against trails; they just want them on someone else's property," commented another agency representative.

The Iowa Department of Transportation in accordance with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) assisted with technical specifications as trail regulations did not exist (interview with agency representative). A State Recreational Trails grant of $52,500 was awarded for a 190.6 acre right-of-way acquisition in March 1990. In April 1992, a second State Recreational Trails grant of $107,250 was awarded for 16 miles of trail construction (IDED December 2006). The grant covered costs to grade and surface an eight-foot wide path with crushed limestone and installation of fencing, signage, and culverts. According to an agency representative, outside funding from state and federal sources creates more loops and processes to go through. "If you use their money, then you have to follow their rules. Costs more in the long run but results in a better product," claimed the agency representative. Great benefits resulted from state grants, legislator response, and public support said another agency representative. The trail was officially opened on October 3, 1992, National Rails-to-Trails Day, with charity fundraising, workshops, food, and music (*Cresco Times Plain Dealer* September 30, 1992). Fundraising included a five-mile hike and 10-mile bicycle ride.

Development

A local Boy Scout Troop constructed an interpretive loop identifying various types of railroad signs and markers. This educational feature recalls the trail's history as a rail line. The Winneshiek County Conservation Board and local partners have promoted prairie restoration in disturbed areas along the trail. Trailheads feature plantings and kiosks provide information on prairie restoration and trail amenities. Their purpose is to increase awareness about the value of native plant communities, preservation of native remnants, restoration of endangered species, and importance of local ecotype plants.

Rare and endangered prairie species along the trail include the white prairie fringed orchid and prairie bush clover. Early spring species include prairie smoke, hoary puccoon, golden alexander, pasque flower, Canada anemone, white wild indigo, spiderwort, and phlox. Midsummer species include rattlesnake master, yellow coneflower, lead plant, prairie clover, wild quinine, blazing star, black-eyed susan, wild bergamot, swamp milkweed, Culver's root, and cup plant. Fall species include asters, goldenrod, gentians, blue lobelia, and joe pye weed. Grasses include big bluestem, little bluestem, side oats grama, Indian grass, switch grass, northern prairie dropseed, Canada wild rye, and cord grass.

A special committee formed in 1999 to create a trail to the Prairie's Edge Nature Center. Over a period of 10 years, the city of Cresco raised $600,000 in local funds (interview with committee member). The Prairie Springs Recreational Trail, a three-mile paved trail through city, farm, and woodland landscapes, extends south from Cresco to Vernon Springs Park. The objective was to create a recreational trail for local use and provide a safe route for children riding bicycles from town to the Turkey River. Interest in physical fitness was also a factor and is supported by the city's building of a fitness center (interview with agency representative).

In 2005, an organization called Pave the Way formed to pave the trail surface from crushed limestone to asphalt (interview with committee member). The public expressed demand in upgrading the trail to a hard surface including requests from wheelchair users and inline skaters (IDOT STE 2005). A total of $1.4 million was needed to asphalt the trail. The committee included members from the communities of Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco. The group met bimonthly for two years to plan, prioritize, and discuss the project. Meetings

included representatives from various sectors of the community including mayors and city council members, county supervisors, conservation board members, business owners, and trail supporters. This organization greatly expanded local support while opposition to the trail dissipated over time (interview with agency representative). “People like to be part of a good project, good projects sell themselves, and people have to get used to the idea,” commented another agency representative. In a Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors meeting, Supervisor Dale Fenske commented, “It is, by far, one of the better things happening in Iowa as far as tourism goes” (IDED December 2006).

According to an agency representative, “Public support drives trail development. Projects begin as small trails to a local destination and then on to another destination. Dreams started small and have expanded to create a regional destination trail.” To become a destination trail, communities must be tourist attractions with places of interest, food and lodging, and retail shopping (MDNR 2000). Trail impacts on quality of life and sense of place are important economic development assets. Trails may attract free agents who choose their business location by the community and not by the market (IDOT 2000, 15). In a letter of support for a grant application, Randy Uhl, Executive Director of Winneshiek County Development, Inc., wrote the following: “Trails are as vital to a community’s quality of life as public libraries and swimming pools were in the last century. To attract and retain highly skilled employees and employers, as well as the self-employed in today’s business environment, we need to create a community where quality of life is a priority. Paving the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail takes a step in that direction” (IDED December 2006).

Paving of the trail is anticipated to increase use and stimulate economic growth through increased sales, tourism, and job development (MDNR 2000). Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development agreed to provide assistance with partnership building, project planning, grant identification, and grant writing (interview with agency representative). Dozens of citizen volunteers invested thousands of hours in planning, fundraising, and publicity for the project. Local fund-raising included naming options for mile markers, bike racks, and bike shelters. The county conservation board director led the committee’s activities. Funds were raised among the two counties and three communities in a period of 18 months. Trail development exceeded expectations due to community support,

favorable timing, and an accelerated timetable (interview with committee member). "We exceeded our expectations; we really did get it done. A small community such as Cresco pulls together easier and the fund-raising ability is amazing," said a committee member.

State funds included a $593,668 Community Attraction and Tourism grant in 2006. In 2004 and 2006, Federal Regional Enhancement funds were approved in the amount of $100,000 for each year (IDED December 2006). In 2005, a $200,000 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant was awarded. In 2006, the cities of Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco were awarded a total of $150,000 in Resource Enhancement and Protection grants for completion of the sections within their city boundaries (*Cresco Times Plain Dealer* October 4, 2006). These town linkages were initiated to coincide with paving of the county portion of the PFRT. The goal was to expand recreational options, increase access to natural resources, and increase capacity of a regional trails system in Northeast Iowa (IDNR REAP 2006).

The Prairie Springs Recreational Trail Committee pledged to raise $150,000. The communities of Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco pledged $90,000 and Howard and Winneshiek counties approved $220,000. Winneshiek County Supervisor Dean Darling expressed concern that not everyone thinks that trail paving is a good use of taxpayer money (Strandberg 2006). Howard County unsuccessfully applied three times for State Recreational Trail funding (IDED December 2006). Competition for these funds has been influenced by large projects such as the Trout Run Trail in Decorah according to an agency representative.

Increased sales tax revenues in the town of Lanesboro, Minnesota stimulated interest in paving the trail and extending its length said a committee member. Trail advocates looked at sales revenues in Lanesboro, Minnesota from 1977-2003. From 1977-1983, annual revenues were four million dollars. From 1991-1999, they increased from $11 to $18 million. These increases coincided with the increased number of paved miles of trail. The longer the trail, the longer tourists spend on the trail and the more money they spend for food, lodging, and transportation (IDED December 2006). Supporters of the PFRT concluded that it must be paved and have sufficient length. Connecting the PFRT to the Harmony-Preston Valley and Root River State Trails in Minnesota would result in the creation of the seventh 100-mile trail in the United States.

According to an agency representative, trail development involves five stages: local work to plan and form ideas, securing grants for implementation, incremental success in intermediate steps, expanded community and public awareness, and completion of additional pieces to form a regional long-distance network. One committee member expressed that unique contributions have been made by individuals and their respective organizations including committees, county conservation boards, and regional organizations. "Iowa trails are locally driven compared to Minnesota trails which are state driven, and there are more but shorter trails in Iowa," stated an agency representative.

Interest in becoming part of a regional trail network is growing. The mayor of one of the Iowa communities visited Lanesboro and was encouraged by a comment from Minnesota trail users, "Is there another trail nearby?" An agency representative stated that the Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission and Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development recently met with county conservation board directors and county engineers to explore future trail locations in Northeast Iowa. Centrally located and of sufficient length, the PFRT is the most logical connection for other area trails. Northeast of Calmar, an abandoned rail line remains for future connectivity with the Trout Run Trail in Decorah. See Figures 3.12, 3.13, and 3.14 for images of trail amenities.

Figure 3.12 Balk Park trailhead and information center in Cresco.

Figure 3.13 Woodland path of the Prairie Springs Recreational Trail.

Figure 3.14 Rest shelter along Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail.

Amenities

Amenities include food, lodging, and support services in Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco. Camping is available at the Turkey River Campground via the three-mile Prairie Springs Recreational Trail and at Lake Meyer Park, two miles from Calmar along Iowa Highway 24 near Fort Atkinson. County nature centers featuring conservation and natural resource

exhibits are located near Turkey River Campground and at Lake Meyer Park. The trail includes rest areas, picnic tables, and shelters. Water, toilets, shelter, and playground are available at the Ridgeway Trailside Park.

Natural resources include farm fields, native prairie, and trailside woodland. Corridor enhancements will improve the environment for outdoor recreation, native plant communities, and wildlife habitat. Connecting with the Prairie Springs Recreational Trail in Cresco, access is provided to the Prairie's Edge Nature Center, Vernon Springs Mill Pond, and the Turkey River located in Vernon Springs Park (IDNR REAP 2006). Historic resources include Cresco's Beadle Park with its historic locomotive and log cabin, Cresco Opera House, Calmar railroad depot, and Fort Atkinson State Preserve. Cresco is the home community of Norman Borlaug, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 and founder of the green revolution (IDED December 2006). Cultural resources include the Howard County Historical Museum and Iowa Wrestling Hall of Fame in Cresco. The Bily Clocks Museum and Antonin Dvorak Exhibit is located in Spillville, considered the most historic Czech village in America. Northeast Iowa Community College serving more than 2,250 students and the Northeast Iowa Dairy Center are in Calmar. Recreation resources include the Cresco Speedway, city owned Cresco Fitness Center, and public swimming pool in Calmar. The bike shop in Cresco sponsors weekly rides in summer to increase use and appreciation for the trail.

Artistic resources include Balk Park trailhead and bronze sculptures in Cresco. Balk Park is the official trailhead for the Prairie Springs Recreational Trail and includes native plants, a water feature, and gazebo. The trailhead is intended to become a way station for Monarch and other butterfly species through additional plantings (IDNR REAP 2006). Area tourism attractions include outdoor recreation, museums, and festivals such as Calmar Farmer's Day and Fort Atkinson Rendezvous Days. Primary uses include walking, running, biking, inline skating, and cross-country skiing. Snowmobiling is allowed from Cresco to Ridgeway in winter.

> *The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission marked a notable point…the simple, close-to-home activities, it discovered, are by and far away the most important to Americans…The structure of our metropolitan areas has long since been set by nature and man, by the rivers and hills, and the railroads and highways. Many*

options remain, and the great task of planning in not to come up with another structure but to work within the strengths we have, and to discern this structure as people experience it in their everyday life. William H. Whyte, The Last Landscape, 1968.

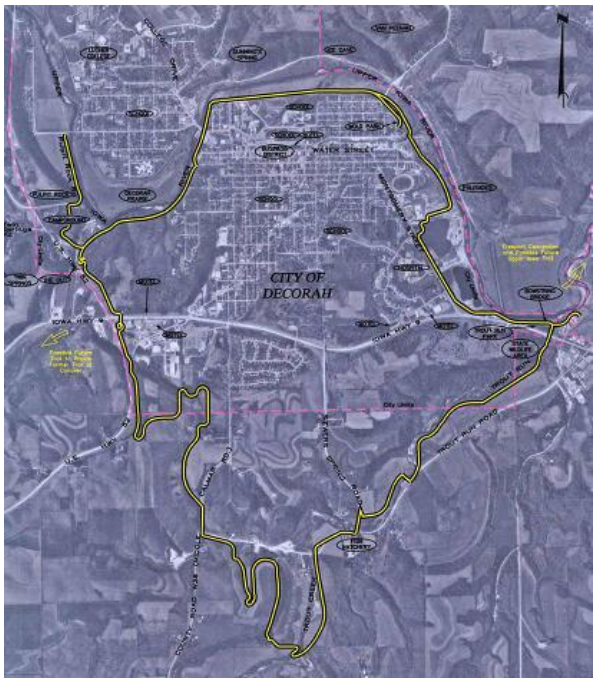

Figure 3.15 Trout Run Trail map. Source: Winneshiek County Conservation Board, http://www.winneshiekcounty.org/winncon/rec_trails.htm.

3.4 Trout Run Trail (TRT)

Current State

The Trout Run Trail (TRT) scheduled for completion in 2010 will be an 11-mile paved recreational trail circling the city of Decorah in Winneshiek County. The trail provides access to the Upper Iowa River, city parks, public campground, trout streams, fish hatchery, and business corridor near the intersection of Iowa Highway 9 and Old Stage Road (Decorah Chamber of Commerce 2006). Organized into 14 segments, 11 segments comprising eight miles were complete in 2009. The remaining segments totaling three miles are scheduled for completion in 2010. The population of Decorah is 8,172 with 21,310 in Winneshiek County (United States Census Bureau 2000). Luther College, an undergraduate liberal arts institution

in Decorah, has an enrollment of approximately 2,500 students (Luther College 2009). See Figure 3.15 and Appendix 10 for a map of the trail.

Geography

The trail begins at Pulpit Rock Campground and travels east along Dug Road, a closed gravel road. Algific talus slopes, cold air drainages with unique vegetation, meet the road at various points. The trail enters Phelps Park, descends the levee, and parallels the Upper Iowa River. Passing under a road bridge, the trail continues inside the levee and emerges at Wold Park. The trail winds around an industrial site and the county fairgrounds. Doubling as trail and sidewalk for a short distance, the trail enters Bowstring Park with its historic 160-foot bowstring bridge. Traveling under Iowa Highway 9, the trail follows its namesake, a coldwater trout stream called Trout Run Creek. Winding through native prairie and farm fields, the trail provides entry to several handicap accessible fishing points. The trail continues to the Decorah Fish Hatchery and Siewers Spring, the second largest spring in Iowa and sole water source for the hatchery. Continuing through farm fields and livestock pasture, the paved trail ends at a forested ravine. Construction is in progress for remaining segments. These areas offer terrain changes and engineering challenges. The final segment will be an elevated ramp near the limestone channel west of the campground. The channel called "The Cut" was a focal point of the Army Corps of Engineers flood diversion project which created Decorah's levee system. This completes the 11-mile loop of paved trail (Trails of Winneshiek 2009). See Figures 3.16, 3.17, and 3.18 for views along the trail.

Figure 3.16 The Trout Run Trail passes Wold Park in Decorah.

Figure 3.17 Bowstring Park and the historic bridge built in 1879.

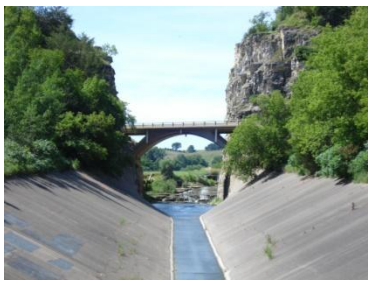

Figure 3.18 The highway bridge through "The Cut" in Decorah.

Origin

Developed in segments of varying lengths, the first to be completed was the Dug Road segment, a three-quarter mile closed road connecting campground and city in 1995 (interview with government official). The road was originally a haul road during construction of the levee flood control project. The project was authorized by the City of Decorah and Parks and Recreation Department. In 1997, the second segment following the Upper Iowa River levee to Wold Park was completed, providing a recreational opportunity along the river and floodplain. These first two segments were named the Oneota River Trail. Oneota refers to the Indian name for the river and rock outcropping near the river's mouth and translates to "people who sprung from a rock" (Faldet 2009, 5). An agency representative stated that trail segments were prioritized according to logistical ease and value to the community from a parks and recreation perspective.

In 1998, private citizens met to discuss potential trails for Winneshiek County. Discussion focused on connecting the city to the state fish hatchery with a recreational trail. In 2001, a local trails group called Trails of Winneshiek (TOW) was formally organized. Originally a mountain biking oriented group, TOW members gravitated toward paved trails as the project gained public support (interview with committee member). Members formed a routing committee to create a master map, plot existing trails, identify multiple destinations, and propose a grand scheme to link the entire system (IDNR REAP 2005). The trail to the fish hatchery was given priority as it was a highly scenic route, involved relatively few property owners, and was under pressure for development. According to an economic development representative, this segment was doable for several reasons including value as an employee retention asset, amenity for technology commuters, and function as a tourist attraction.

Current membership in TOW is approximately 150 and the mission statement is as follows: "We, the members of Trails of Winneshiek, intend to create a recreational trail system throughout the Winneshiek County area. We will strive to develop public trails that connect destinations while promoting existing facilities, to improve the quality of life, economic vitality, and social welfare of the County. We are dedicated to being advocates for the alternative non-motorized transportation for the facilities and routes adopted by the

group. We place an importance on scenery, cost effectiveness, and safety for a wide range of activities for all ages and abilities" (Trails of Winneshiek 2009).

Development

The trails group held public meetings and educated citizens about the trail project. The project was approved by the city council in 2002. TOW made presentations to the Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission. Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development adopted the project and agreed to provide assistance with grant identification and grant writing. In 2003, a Federal Transportation Enhancement grant of $78,220 was received (IDED March 2006). This grant was for asphalting 1.7 miles of trail along Trout Run Creek from Bowstring Park to the fish hatchery (*Decorah Public Opinion*, March 4, 2003).

In 2004, the city council approved 25 percent of the hotel/motel tax to be used for trails, estimated at $50,000 annually. A month later, the city council authorized $10,000 for preliminary engineering costs for trail development (*Decorah Journal*, July 22, 2004). A 28E agreement was developed to document city and county support for the project prior to applying for grants. The resolution stated that, "The City of Decorah will jointly, with Winneshiek County, be responsible for the engineering estimates for grant writing purposes, the coordination of grant writing, and the construction and maintenance of the proposed Trout Run Bike Trail" (IDED March 2006).

The project has brought together multiple partners from all sectors of the community. These include the Trails of Winneshiek, City of Decorah, Decorah Parks and Recreation, Decorah Chamber of Commerce, Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors, Winneshiek County Conservation Board, Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Winneshiek County Economic Development, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Iowa Department of Transportation, Iowa Department of Economic Development, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Fisheries, Hatchery Management, and Wildlife Management Divisions), Iowa Great Places, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Luther College, Trout Unlimited, Farm Bureau, service organizations, landowners, and private citizens. The partnering of city, county, regional, and state entities, public and private,

has been critical in the success of grant applications and implementation strategies (interview with agency representative).

The cost for this project was estimated at $750,000. Funding included $250,000 in city and county Resource Enhancement and Protection grants, a Federal Recreational Trails grant of $78,000, and $150,000 in hotel-motel tax proceeds (*Decorah Public Opinion,* October 11, 2005). The fish hatchery was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's and modernized in 1989. One of three trout hatcheries in Iowa, the hatchery raises rainbow, brook, and brown trout (IDED March 2006). Adjacent to the hatchery is Siewers Spring, the second largest natural spring in Iowa and sole water source for the hatchery. Trout Run Creek is the coldwater stream that flows from the hatchery to the Upper Iowa River.

Trail committee members have contributed over 15,000 hours toward trail research, design, development, and promotion. According to an agency representative, "The trail has taken many different turns in design and construction." In September 2005, an informal social engagement took place with members of TOW and Vision Iowa board member Andy Anderson (interview with committee member). Located within the Iowa Department of Economic Development, Vision Iowa provides grant funding for a variety of projects. Following Anderson's encouragement, the committee expanded the project to a 7.5-mile perimeter loop trail around Decorah. As one committee member remarked, "When we started, all we wanted was to ride to the fish hatchery."

Tourism and economic development became a primary motivation for trail development as many TOW members are local businessmen. In the words of an agency representative, "Many communities think that a pot of gold exists among tourists. Trails create excitement and can bring money not otherwise available." The Iowa Tourism Office estimated tourism in Winneshiek County at more than $17 million in 2002 (Decorah Chamber of Commerce 2009).

Trails of Winneshiek focused on destinations and how to connect them with the trail's alignment. TOW members began visiting with landowners, one-on-one and in private, meeting many times to receive input and feedback regarding trail alignment. Two committee members, professional businessmen, made all the landowner contacts. "Private landowners are the holy grail of the trail," said one committee member. Twenty four landowners were

involved in the trail alignment for the Trout Run Trail (interview with government official). Landowners raised concerns about liability and vandalism and committee members explained that these fears have not materialized on other trails. A park ranger for the Elroy-Sparta State Trail in Wisconsin stated that there have been no liability claims in the trail's 40-year history (interview with committee member). For land acquisition, TOW was more effective in working with private landowners than a government entity due to personal connection and trust. "Trust and passion are the difference," remarked a committee member.

Funding for the $7.2 million dollar project has included a $1.6 million Community Attraction and Tourism grant in 2006 to complete "The Cut" section, $1.3 million in local funds, $750,000 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant, and $290,000 Iowa Great Places grant in 2007 (IDED March 2006). A Federal Recreational Trails grant of $95,000 was awarded in September 2005 for two miles of trail construction. A State Recreational Trails grant of $138,088 was awarded in 2008 for bridge construction. An important local fundraising strategy was the option for naming rights (interview with committee member). Private donations to the trail project are handled through the Winneshiek County Community Foundation, a non-profit corporation.

The Decorah Fish Hatchery is one of six full-time hatcheries in the state and one of three that raise trout. The water supplying the hatchery comes from Siewers Spring, the second largest natural spring in Iowa. The hatchery produces over 100,000 trout annually to be released into trout streams in Northeast Iowa according to Bill Kalishek, Fisheries Biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The facility is a popular destination for families and school groups. More than 50 guided tours and 20,000 self-guided visitors tour the hatchery each year (IDED March 2006). Several handicap accessible fishing points have been constructed along Trout Run Creek. Approximately 12,000 angler trips are made each year, 20 percent from people with limited mobility, and future use is expected to increase. According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Bureau 2001 Trout Angler Survey, Trout Run ranks 11th in angler use out of 50 coldwater trout streams in Iowa (Decorah Chamber of Commerce 2009).

In July 2009, Decorah was awarded $200,000 through an Iowa Great Places grant with $100,000 dedicated to public art. The Trout Run Trail Public Art Committee was created

through a 28E agreement between the city and county. Their mission is to lead an open and public process in the identification, acquisition, and installation of durable art. Three pieces of artwork have been commissioned for the trail and the first was installed in August 2009. The River Horizon Archway, a Corten and stainless steel arch 16 feet tall and 27 feet wide, serves as a gateway between urban and rural sections of the trail (Trails of Winneshiek 2009).

Public awareness and participation activities for the trail project included open meetings, city council presentations, marketing activities by the chamber of commerce, and a kick-off barbeque at the fish hatchery. To maintain transparency, information was posted on the TOW website. Press releases were sent to local newspapers and radio stations to publicize activities and explain proposals. Following divisive battles over downtown street improvements, location of a Walmart Supercenter, and closure of an east side school, opposition to the project was minimal. "People wanted a project to agree upon…the trail project was a healing effort for the community," stated an agency representative. The trail brought adversaries together and was the most unifying project in many years said another committee member. "The project gave the community something positive to rally around and has been a source of community pride," said a government official.

The Economic Development Associations in Howard and Winneshiek counties were instrumental in promoting the economic development benefits of multi-use trails. The 1987 and 2000 user study data for the Root River State Trail in Minnesota was utilized to show the potential for areas with similar natural resources and economic conditions. At a 2006 Iowa Rivers Revival Conference, Mark Ackelson, President of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, recognized the potential of Decorah's trails to have similar impact as the Root River State Trail in Lanesboro, Minnesota. Quality of life and sense of place are assets that may be used to attract business to Decorah. The IDOT publication, *Implementing Trail-Based Economic Development Programs*, was referenced many times by trail advocates.

The concept of the "free agent" was described in letters of support, grant applications, and an online video. Free agents are able to select their business location not by the market but rather by the community. They may rent business space or work from their homes (IDOT 2000, 15). Proposed impacts include increases in entrepreneurial business, tourism, and

quality of life. Northeast Iowa, Luther College, and the City of Decorah have attractive resources for free agents and retirees. A committee member expressed, "The trail is a centerpiece for bringing all the benefits together. The trail is a peripheral destination trail." Decorah area trails include the multi-use Trout Run Trail, 17 miles of mountain bike trails, and the Upper Iowa River water trail (Trails of Winneshiek 2009). Measures of success for the trail will include tourism activity, hotel and motel taxes, and wintertime lodging occupancy rates (interview with government official).

The City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and private landowners will share ownership while the city and county will maintain the trail through a 28E agreement (Trails of Winneshiek 2009). Maintenance is estimated at $10,000 per year based on statewide averages and $2,000 per year for cross-country ski trail grooming in winter. The trail provides many of the benefits of a state recreational area without creating the opposition associated with large-scale land acquisition (IDED March 2006). Success in this project is likely as it has substantial natural and economic resources, strong local and regional support, and meets regional recreation demands. In a Decorah Parks and Recreation Department survey, as many as 800 walkers and 500 other types of users utilize certain segments of the trail system each day. See Figures 3.19, 3.20, and 3.21 for features along the trail.

Figure 3.19 An algific talus slope along the Dug Road segment.

Figure 3.20 A farm along the southern portion of the trail.

Figure 3.21 Handicap stream access along Trout Run Creek.

Amenities

Amenities include a diversity of landscapes and resources. Natural resources include the Upper Iowa River, algific talus slopes, springs, coldwater trout streams, trout hatchery, city parks, farm fields, native prairie, limestone bluffs, and 23-acre campground. Historic

resources include the Broadway Historical District, bowstring bridge, and Civilian Conservation Corps structures. Cultural resources in Decorah include the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Porter House Museum, and Luther College. Near to Decorah are the Seed Savers Exchange and Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum in Burr Oak. Festivals include Nordic Fest, a Scandinavian cultural heritage event drawing tens of thousands of visitors and the Live on Winnebago street fair, an eclectic celebration of world music. Artistic resources include trail art, artist studio tours, and various city and college venues.

Decorah has a higher level of amenities and services compared to any community in the project study area (interview with agency representative). Facilities and services include trailheads, restrooms, camping facilities, bike shops, food and dining, and lodging. Outdoor recreational activities include canoeing, kayaking, tubing, hiking, and mountain biking. Area resources are ideal for single or multi-day excursions. "The project is a piece in the ribbon of trail in Northeast Iowa; an investment in our community," concluded a committee member.

> *It is well to consider the significance of our heritage of river and stream and prairie, of wooded hills, of bluffs and cliffs and headlands looking down over winding watercourses…one would naturally think that the diversions from the level prairie as the bluffs and headlands of rivers would be much greater than it actually is. In the real prairie landscape these picturesque and dramatic expressions are always found in the rivers and glacial lake depressions…It is here where we today find the intimate beauty and loveliness of our country with her hidden treasures in contrast to the free and open prairies. Jens Jensen, Siftings, 1990.*

3.5 Regional Trail Development

Local Area Trails

Among the counties of the study area, there are various types of recreational trails. They include nature, equestrian, mountain bike, off-road, and snowmobile trails. According to standard definitions, most are not multi-use trails of suitable length and surface material for tourist use. They were not designed as regional trails to connect communities or purposely designed as tourist destinations. For many reasons, these trails will likely remain as they are for their intended user groups, complementing the full spectrum of local, year-round, trail-based recreation resources. In addition to the multi-use trails examined in this study in Mitchell, Howard, and Winneshiek counties, there are other types of trails with varying uses.

In Mitchell County, there are primitive double track trails along the Cedar River Greenbelt. Howard County has a nature trail at Prairie's Edge Nature Center. More than 350 miles of snowmobile trails extending throughout four counties utilize Cresco as their central hub. Winneshiek County has 17 miles of mountain bike trails in Decorah, nature trails at Lake Meyer and other sites, and the Upper Iowa River water trail. In the counties of Allamakee, Clayton, and Fayette, multi-use trail development is less advanced.

Allamakee County has 25 miles of hiking trails in the Yellow River State Forest (Northeast Iowa Tourism Association 2009). The county is focused on pursuing federal monies for development of the Mississippi River Trail. Though the county has abundant natural resources and cross-country and snowmobile trails, there are no abandoned railroad tracks or local organizations promoting multi-use trail development. It was the last county in the state to form a conservation board in 1990, an organization that develops and maintains public recreational resources (Jim Janett, personal communication). Allamakee County has the highest percentage of public lands in the study area including Yellow Creek State Forest and Effigy Mounds National Park.

Clayton County has the Pony Hollow Trail, a four-mile crushed limestone trail. A trail plan was initiated by an equestrian group for a 28-mile trail along a rail line in the 1970's (Clayton County Conservation Board 2009). One landowner opposed the proposed trail resulting in the existing four-mile trail. In 2000, a $26,000 Community Attraction and Tourism matching grant was awarded to surface the trail with crushed limestone. The Great River Road Trail, part of the Mississippi River Trail, consists of a paved shoulder along existing roads from Guttenberg to McGregor.

Fayette County has the Fayette County Recreational Trail and several hiking trails including the Albany, Frog Hollow, Lake View, Lima, and Ridge Trails. These trails are located in Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve, Echo Valley State Park, Gilbertson Conservation Education Area, and Volga River State Recreation Area (Fayette County Iowa 2009). A four-mile crushed limestone trail is located in Clermont. In 2009, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development submitted a grant application to Vision Iowa for land acquisition and trail development along the Turkey River from Elgin to Clermont (interview with agency representative). "Developing the river is the county's greatest asset,"

says Rod Marlatt, Fayette County Conservation Board Director (Rod Marlatt, personal communication).

Currently in development, the ten-state Mississippi River Trail (MRT) will include more than 2,000 miles through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana (Mississippi River Trail 2009). Along the 280 miles in Iowa, the trail will utilize existing roads and trails. The trail passes through Allamakee and Clayton counties along the eastern border of the study area. This trail has the potential of being designated a national recreational trail according to the National Trails System Act of 1968 (National Park Service 1991, 1).

With respect to the study area in Northeast Iowa, these trails are part of a regional recreational trail system. According to an agency representative, county conservation board directors, supervisors, and engineers have different perspectives of trails and each county has a different philosophy toward trail development. Existing trails impact the cases being studied in terms of future connections, competition for funding, and assistance from regional organizations.

Regional Trail Planning

Regional trail planning has been a consideration since the inception of all three projects. The Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail Committee envisioned connection from the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota to the trails in Cedar Rapids (interview with committee member). As reported in a newspaper article, a meeting was conducted following opening of the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail in 1992 to discuss expansion of the trail and connection into the city of Cresco (*Cresco Times Plain Dealer*, September 30, 1992). In 2002, TOW prepared a map of proposed trails in Winneshiek County. The map identified future connections from the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail to Decorah and adjacent communities and destinations. Long range objectives included connections to the Cedar River Trail in Cedar Rapids, Root River State Trail in Minnesota, and Mississippi River Trail in Allamakee County. In Decorah, interest in trails existed as far back as the 1970's but opposition from landowners deterred city officials and planners from pursuing trail development.

An agency representative reported that interest and demand for trail development is increasing in each county in the study area. Competition was developing among counties as

they sought the same resources and assistance. Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development provides ongoing leadership for regional trail planning and development. In 2009, meetings of county engineers, conservation board directors, and resource contacts have been organized to discuss regional trail connectivity (interview with agency representative). The best place to locate trails varies according to county resources, logistics, and preferences. Locations may include along existing pavement, roadway back slope, railroad right-of-way, or separate trail alignment (interview with agency representative). Most trails are built according to AASHTO and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, generally eight feet wide and ten feet along grades with two-foot wide shoulders on each side. See Figure 3.22 and Appendix 11 for a Northeast Iowa regional trails map.

Figure 3.22 Northeast Iowa Regional Trails map. Source: Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Inc., 2009.

Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development sponsored a workshop in 2009 with Roger Brooks of Destination Development, Inc. of Seattle, Washington. The workshop focused on characteristics and amenities of destination communities. Recommendations for trail development included production of a trail map, coordination of a cohesive message, creation of promotional materials, and installation of appropriate signage. To benefit economically, businesses need to understand the trail user and nature of the tourist market. "The more you have to offer, collectively, the further people will come and the longer they will stay," said Brooks (Lora Friest, personal communication). Repeat visits and length of

stay are critical tourism elements (IDOT 2000, 16). Research from the Root River State Trail indicates that distance and surface are important for destination trails. According to an agency representative, “Trail development takes time and the Root River State Trail required time to become a destination trail.” The counties in southeastern Minnesota have larger populations than the counties in Northeast Iowa, offering the potential for out-of-state visitors, reduced economic leakage to Minnesota, and increased tourism revenue.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to describe the process of regional trail development among local trail projects in Northeast Iowa. The central question in this study is why did these local trail projects evolve into regional destination trails? Subquestions include the following: What were the motivations and purposes for trails and how did they impact development? How was public awareness and support developed for these trail projects? Who were the actors in the planning process and what actions did they take? What sources of funding were used and how did they impact outcomes? What amenities and resources were important for these trails to become regional trails? The three trail projects selected for investigation in this multiple case study include the WGWLT, PFRT, and TRT.

Strategies for data analysis include reliance on theoretical propositions that led to the case study, development of a descriptive framework for organizing the case study, use of qualitative and quantitative data, and examination of rival explanations (Yin, 2009, 130-34). In this study, all were applied in varying degrees with emphasis on the descriptive framework. Case descriptions feature each trail's current state, geography, origin, development, and amenities. The descriptions integrate primary and secondary data in a chronological structure to provide an account of each trail's development. Data was collected through multiple sources including documents, archival records, participant interviews, direct observation, and physical artifacts.

Analytic techniques may include pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis (Yin 2009, 162). Though pattern matching and explanation building were applied, the primary technique was cross-case synthesis. In this analytic technique, themes are analyzed within each case and across cases (Creswell 2007, 163). Word tables were used to display data from individual cases according to a uniform framework (Yin, 2009, 156). Interpretations were made according to direct and naturalistic interpretation, highlighting similarities and differences among cases.

The procedures of data analysis include data managing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, and interpreting, and representing and visualizing (Creswell 2007,

151). Data managing began with creating and organizing data files. Field notes, documents, and research materials were collected throughout the study. Materials were organized into a filing system according to specific case or general topic. Documents included published materials and photocopies of documents depending on document type. Sources included grant applications, formal studies and surveys, organizational websites, trail publications, letters of support, meeting minutes, and media articles. Archival records were reviewed to identify the actors and actions taken. Survey data was useful in establishing propositions regarding trail use and user preferences. Interview notes were organized according to interview question and interviewee response for each case. Repeated coding and categorizing resulted in identification of themes. Direct observations resulted in notes, sensory experiences, and photographs. Audiovisual resources were examined to assess progress in each case.

Reading involved repeated reading and reflection to understand questions of who, what, and why in document materials. Repeating words and phrases were noted, a form of content analysis commonly used in quantitative research. Repetition among multiple sources provided triangulation and converging lines of evidence, thus adding validity to the study (Creswell 2007, 208). Memoing entailed making margin notes and marking important elements, creating summary lists of thoughts and ideas, and forming initial codes. Coding involves assigning labels to the data items and organizing into clusters, aggregates, and patterns. Data pieces are organized into categories with increasing levels of abstraction and generalization. Collapsing these further, one derives primary themes in the data. For example, a document or interviewee may address why the trail project began and this could be coded as a goal, objective, purpose, use, or motivation. This process represents categorization of instances from the data anticipating emergence of issue relevant meanings (Creswell 2007, 163).

Data was integrated in the case descriptions according to a chronological structure. Describing presents the facts of the case within its multiple contexts. Data sources were carefully reviewed to confirm or disaffirm existing information and complete details for each of the case descriptions. Descriptions were revised and expanded continuously during the study. Classifying consists of condensing codes into themes or dimensions of information.

The final themes include motivations and uses, participation and support, actors and actions, funding and implementation, and amenities and resources. They represent broad issues appropriate to the central research question. Themes were analyzed within each case and across cases.

Interpreting involves making sense of the data through direct interpretation and naturalistic generalizations. Direct interpretation examines a single instance and draws meaning from it. It is a process of pulling the data pieces apart and putting them back together in meaningful ways (Stake 1995; Creswell 2007, 163). Naturalistic generalizations are what people can learn from the case and apply to other cases. These refer to lessons learned and transferability of findings. Interpretation may be guided by the theoretical propositions that led to the case study, descriptive framework for case organization, qualitative and quantitative data, and rival explanations (Yin, 2009, 130-34). All were applied to some degree although a descriptive framework for case organization was the primary guide.

Representing and visualizing is the presentation of data through text, figures, and tables. In this study, detailed case descriptions represent the facts of the case and analysis of themes is presented through discussion and word tables. Word tables are a means of visually expressing similarities and differences among the cases. The report structure is essentially a substantive case report providing explication of the problem, description of the context, description of processes observed, specific elements studied, and outcomes of the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Creswell 2007, 196). The structure of this report includes an introduction including background and research question, research methodology, case descriptions, thematic analysis, and conclusions.

4.2 Major Actors

In this qualitative study of a complex issue involving multiple actors, a brief discussion of their role is important. Following is a summary description of the major actors in trail development, individual, organizational and financial, at local, regional, state, and federal levels.

Individuals and Committees

Citizen committees and private landowners are the basis for private citizen participation. Many trails begin through the leadership of a single individual or small group of individuals. In this study, citizen committees were instrumental in various ways and at different times in each trail's development. Committee contributions include meetings, fundraising, coordination, landowner contacts, publicity, and maintenance. The vast majority of contributions are voluntary through labor, in-kind services, and materials.

Private landowners can be supportive or opposed to trail development. Common fears include loss of privacy, liability, vandalism, noise, and litter. One-on-one contact with landowners by committee members prior to any public announcement is a key factor of successful cooperation. Trail alignments may be secured through outright purchase, conditional lease, or negotiated easement. In this study, most landowners were supportive but significant opposition did exist for two of the three projects. Miscommunication was a supporting factor in landowner opposition.

City and County Government

For each project, the jurisdiction of the trail determines whether city or county government is involved. Local decision-makers, city councils and county boards of supervisors, are critical in terms of public support and allocation of funds and resources. For city projects, the city council, mayor, and parks and recreation department are primary actors. All were involved in the TRT including the city engineer. In the WGWLT and PFRT, city officials from multiple communities played significant roles. In all three trails, county participation involved the board of supervisors and county conservation board. In Iowa, county conservation boards are the equivalent of county parks and recreation departments in other states. Cities and counties represent the public in the concept of public-private partnerships.

County Conservation Boards (CCB)

In 1955, the Iowa State Legislature passed the County Conservation Law, Chapter 350 of the Code of Iowa (Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards 2009). The law allows creation of a county managed and financed conservation board. County conservation boards are public agencies that develop and conserve natural resources and provide programs in

outdoor recreation and environmental education. They may acquire, develop, and maintain areas devoted to conservation and public recreation including parks, wildlife areas, preserves, river accesses, recreation areas, and museums. The boards serve as the primary natural resource management agency in the county and educate residents in environmental issues, operate nature centers, manage wildlife conservation efforts, and administer roadside vegetation management programs (Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards 2009). County conservation boards participate in many cost-sharing programs with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies in program areas where state and local goals are complementary. These programs include Resource Enhancement and Protection, Wildlife Habitat Fee Grant Program, Marine Fuel Tax Water Access, Snowmobile Trail Development and Operation, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Statewide Recreational Trails Program, and Recreation Infrastructure Program (IDNR 2001). The county conservation boards own and maintain the WGWLT and PFRT while the city and county conservation board share ownership and maintenance of the TRT.

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC)

Councils of government in Iowa include Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Planning Affiliates. The Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) is the regional planning affiliate for Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties. They help officials identify and prioritize local and regional problems and employ a full-time professional staff for program planning, delivery, and administration. Issues and needs are addressed through communications, planning, advocacy, technical assistance, and grant writing (IDNR 2001). Federal transportation funds are administered through them. Though involved in inventory preparation for the Statewide Recreational Trails Plan, the UERPC was relatively absent in development of this study's trail projects. As local trails merge into a regional system, greater involvement from the UERPC is anticipated. According to Wendy Mihm-Herold, Executive Director, regional trail planning is in its infancy with meetings held in early 2009 (Wendy Mihm-Herold, personal communication). Objectives include developing a concept map for trails, connecting with other trails, and applying for funds as a region. Councils of government are responsible for preparing long-range transportation plans and trails are part of a multi-modal transportation system.

Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. (NIRCD)

A non-profit entity of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development is involved in rural and economic development in Allamakee, Buchanan, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties. Assistance includes planning, organization, capacity building, technical assistance, and grant writing. Focus areas in Northeast Iowa include private lands conservation, community and economic development, local and value added sustainable agriculture, education, and alternative energy, recycling, and waste (NIRCD 2009). NIRCD is the lead facilitator of regional trail planning for the six counties in their service area. According to Lora Friest, Coordinator, a longer paved trail that connects resources is essential for development of a destination trail. In 2009, NIRCD sponsored a workshop featuring Roger Brooks of Destination Development, Inc., to discuss the impacts of trails on tourism and economic development. One goal was to explore how Northeast Iowa may use trails to enhance identity as a tourist destination with a high quality of life (Lora Friest, personal communication).

Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT)

The Iowa Department of Transportation plays an active role in trail planning and development and administration of funding programs. The State Recreational Trails program is administered by the Iowa Department of Transportation. Grants are available to governmental agencies and private nonprofit organizations for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, and improving recreational trails. The grant requires a 25 percent local match and the trail must be maintained as a public facility for a minimum of 20 years. Proposed projects must be part of a statewide, regional, or local trail plan (IDNR 2001). Federal Recreational Trails program selection criteria include trail use accommodation, compatible recreational purposes, trail use and access by special populations, trail linkages, public and private partnerships, incorporation with other plans, leverage of funds, public participation, connection with other resources, maintenance agreements, and area improvement (IDOT 2009).

The Federal Transportation Enhancements program, originating from the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), funds enhancement or preservation activities for transportation related projects. Trail projects may fall into one of three categories: trails

and bikeways, historic preservation, or scenic and natural resources. A 20-30 percent local match is required, depending on whether the project has regional or statewide significance (IDNR 2001). Trail levels include statewide significant trails, regional trails (multi-county) and city or park oriented trails. In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) changed funding distribution from the states to Metropolitan Planning Organizations or Regional Planning Affiliates. Ten percent of funding resources must be allocated for trails. Cities, counties, or council of governments must own and maintain the trails for 20 years.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

Though limited in involvement, the Department of Natural Resources does assist in trail development through funding programs. The mission for the Parks, Recreation, and Preserves Division of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is to provide leadership in outdoor recreation through management, planning services, grant programs, and other services. Outdoor recreation grant programs administered by the IDNR include the following: Recreation Infrastructure Grant, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Resource Enhancement and Protection, Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant, Water Recreation Access Cost-Share, All-Terrain Vehicle Trail Grant, and Snowmobile Trail Grant. The IDNR was actively involved with the TRT for land acquisition and trail easements through the fisheries and wildlife management divisions.

The Resource Enhancement and Protection program (REAP) is a major investment by the state in its natural and cultural resources. Grant programs include 100 percent grants for city parks and open spaces and county conservation. City grants are distributed according to three population categories: less than 2,000, 2,000-25,000, and greater than 25,000. Annual grant ceilings apply according to city population. Eligible projects include park land expansion and multi-purpose recreation development. County conservation grants are for land easements or acquisitions, capital improvements, stabilization and protection of resources, repair and upgrading of facilities, environmental education, and equipment. Counties must allocate at least $.22 per $1,000 of assessed value of taxable property to be eligible (Ross Harrison, personal communication). REAP is funded by the state's general fund and receipts from the sale of natural resource license plates. Applications require discussion of the development

plan and map, benefits and needs, environmental, economic, and social impacts, and historical, archaeological, and architectural features, public notification and participation, and estimated costs.

The Recreation Infrastructure Grant (RIG) program is a result of the Iowa Legislative Recreation Summit held in 1997. The Iowa General Assembly appropriates funds to the IDNR to assist in the renovation, repair, or construction of public recreation facilities and recreation trails through the Rebuild Iowa's Infrastructure Fund. Special consideration is given to projects that involve public and private sector participation. Funds are provided in the form of grants covering one third of total eligible project costs.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF) was created by Congress in 1965 to create parks and open spaces, protect wilderness, wetlands, and refuges, preserve habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities (IDNR 2001). The act provides federal financial assistance for the purpose of acquisition and development of land for outdoor recreation. The LWCF is federally administered by the National Park Service while the IDNR administers the program at the state level. Funds are allocated to the states to distribute in the form of grants to cities and counties. Grants require a 50 percent match and assistance is limited according to population. Eligible projects include acquisition and development of land for outdoor recreation as well as renovation of existing facilities (IDNR 2001). Financial assistance through the LWCF is authorized through the year 2014 though annual appropriations are variable.

Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED)

The mission of the Iowa Department of Economic Development is to engender and promote economic development policies and practices which stimulate and sustain Iowa's economic growth and climate and that integrate efforts across public and private sectors (IDED 2009). The Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant program supports projects that promote recreational, cultural, educational, or entertainment attractions available to the general public. Attraction means a permanently located recreational, cultural, educational or entertainment activity available to the general public. Community attraction projects may include the following: museums, theme parks, cultural and recreational centers, recreational trails, heritage attractions, and sports arenas. A tourism facility draws people into

the community from at least 50 miles from home (IDNR 2001). Maximum grant of 50 percent of project cost, maximum of 25 percent of local match may be in-kind or non-financial services. Applications are evaluated on a 100-point scale according to the following criteria: feasibility, economic impact, leveraged activity, matching funds, planning principles, and technology and values. A total of $12 million is appropriated annually through 2013 by the Iowa Legislature.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF)

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a non-profit organization, was incorporated in 1979 to utilize the full potential of private sector assistance in natural area and resource protection. The mission of the foundation is to build partnerships and educate Iowans to protect, preserve, and enhance Iowa's natural resources for future generations. The foundation works with private landowners, government agencies, and potential funding sources, serving as a catalyst to bring about protective actions (acquisitions, fee title, conservation easements, preserve dedications, and land donations). As a private entity, INHF enjoys a high degree of flexibility and a swift pace of action that is not always possible with government agencies (IDNR 2001). In trail development, the organization is instrumental in meeting with community groups at the initial planning stages, particularly for rail-to-trail conversions.

4.3 Themes

In this study, analysis is organized according to themes within each case and across cases. Similarities and differences relating to these categories are discussed. Themes include motivations and uses, participation and support, actors and actions, funding and implementation, and amenities and resources.

Motivations and Uses

Motivations represent the rationale and origin for the trail project. For multi-use trails, they may include local recreation, health and wellness, safe transportation, quality of life, community identity, environmental protection, open space preservation, and tourism and economic development. Motivations may be singular or multiple depending on the interests of the individuals and organizations involved. Uses indicate the targeted groups for which the

trail is designed. This reflects issues of location, design, surface material, length, and connectivity.

Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail

Establishment of a local recreational resource was a primary motivation for the WGWLT. An agency representative stated that a recreational trail from Riceville to Lake Hendricks recreational area was an early need in trail development. The first section to be completed was 1.2 miles from town to the lake and campground. It provided a safe and direct route for children and adults and was the most doable piece according to an agency representative. Lake Hendricks is an attractive community resource for the residents of Riceville. Completion of this section made sense in terms of being a public destination, logistically straightforward, and valuable to a large number of people.

A second emphasis was environmental and historical preservation. One committee member said that goals included restoration of prairie and wildlife habitat. Development of Prairie Visions, planting of trees along Memory Lane, and creation of a butterfly garden demonstrate interest in nature and environmental preservation. These projects reflected the particular interests of committee members and were completed by volunteers. Historical preservation was practiced in various ways throughout the trail's development. The largest project was relocation of the Riceville Baptist Church to serve as a trail Welcome Center. Exhibit collections of two former residents, Isabel Moore Kimball and Glenn Crossman, were assembled at this site. Incorporation of two historic bridges references to transportation technology of the settlement period. The committee's interests to preserve local history and make the trail relevant to community residents are apparent in these efforts. Though regional in location by connecting multiple communities, the trail is local in its presentation of community history, interests, and values.

One committee member confirmed that the original vision included connection north to the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota and southeast to trails in Cedar Rapids. The scope of the trail project was influenced by the 1990 Statewide Recreational Trails Plan which identified the Wapsipinicon River Corridor for its river and railroad assets, as mentioned by a committee member and an agency representative. The state plan provided justification and credibility for the trail project. Existence of intact pieces of the rail bed northwest of

Riceville encouraged trail development beyond Lake Hendricks said an agency representative. Conversion of existing rail beds is easier and less costly than construction of new trail on alternative routes. These right-of-way corridors are one of the few remaining opportunities for public recreational development.

Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail

For the PFRT, the primary motivation was development of a recreational amenity for the communities of Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco. The trail was a regional trail from the very beginning as it connected multiple communities. The original crushed limestone surface limited the extent of trail uses. The county conservation board director had become familiar with rail-trails and greenway corridors during graduate school. The project proceeded rapidly due to the director's experience with rails-trails and early success in securing funding. In the first public meetings, opposition to the trail quickly developed. Rather than being resolved through direct communication, opposition to the trail was addressed through legal processes. The trail was established by the county conservation board rather than through a local citizens committee. This scenario was the likely cause of mistrust and lack of ownership among community residents and property owners along the trail.

Many years following the opening of the trail in 1992, interest developed in paving the trail with asphalt. After 12 years, the crushed limestone surface had deteriorated and required resurfacing. Asphalt paving of the Root River State Trail in Minnesota had produced significant economic development benefits to communities along the trail. Motivated by potential tourism and economic development, the three communities initiated the Pave the Way campaign. The following statement was presented in a grant application: "This project is expected to stimulate steady economic growth over several years. Increased sales, job development, and job creation at existing businesses are expected based on the success of projects in similar areas, the quality of the resources in the project area, and the current demand for the project. Business development is expected to occur based on the improvement to quality of life in the community and the increased profile of the community" (IDED December 2006). These motivations and demonstration of public support reflected a change in perspective toward the trail and its importance to the community. Although the county conservation board director preferred the original surface, the paving project moved

forward with widespread community support. According to the director, crushed limestone limits the range of trail uses and results in a slower trail experience. An asphalt surface is more expensive and higher maintenance, requiring additional external funding. These factors may have delayed interest and action in paving the trail prior to the Pave the Way campaign.

A subsequent motivation for the trail has been environmental education. Trailhead plantings and prairie remnants along the trail are expected to build awareness of native plant communities, prairie loss, remnant preservation, endangered species, and local ecotypes (IDNR REAP 2006). Informational kiosks at trailheads will feature native plant species and restoration practices. Though initial efforts have been made, more remains to be done toward this goal. Emphasis on prairie is in keeping with the geography, vegetation, and name of this recreational trail.

Trout Run Trail

Early development of the TRT was motivated by a desire to improve recreational resources in Decorah. The first segment linked the city and campground creating access for both residents and campers. A second segment continued the trail along the river levee to a city park. These two segments were named the Oneota Trail and were initiated by the Decorah Parks and Recreation Department. Following formation of TOW in 2001, development of a trail from Bowstring Park to the fish hatchery became a priority. Encouragement by a Vision Iowa board member resulted in project expansion and interest in tourism and economic development. Many members of the trail committee were employed in banking, business, and professions interested in the economic state of the community.

The expanded project consisted of a peripheral loop trail connecting multiple destinations. Conditions were favorable in terms of project desirability, community support, and funding. Availability of state funding and future economic development benefits encouraged the committee. The IDOT publication, *Implementing Trail-Based Economic Development Programs*, guided the committee members. Three benefits promoted by the trail committee included free agency, tourism, and quality of life. The concept of entrepreneurial free agency was discussed during participant interviews and in an online video. The project was doable in terms of being a tourism attraction, amenity for technology commuters, and employee retention asset according to an agency representative. Northeast

Iowa, the City of Decorah, and Luther College have attractive resources for free agents, tourists, and retirees. A peripheral loop trail connects the best of the city's resources for many different types of users.

Uses among the three trail projects are similar and include walking, running, biking, inline skating, and cross-country skiing in winter. According to an Iowa publication, the trail surface is the primary determinant of the types of users it will draw. Fishing is possible along the WGWLT and TRT, the latter having multiple handicap accessible fishing points. Snowmobiling is allowed on a portion of the PFRT to accommodate members of the Driftrunners snowmobiling club. Appealing to multiple users garners greater community support for trail development. All user types should be considered when determining trail alignment, design, and maintenance (Fiala 1999, 66). The trails have been built to American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) minimum standards for quality and accessibility. Trail user conflict has not been a problem on these projects. Most conflicts on multi-use trails arise from overuse, poor planning, and ineffective management (Dolesh 2004, 58-59).

Cross-Case Synthesis

Motivations for trail development began with a local community desire for public recreation. Initial emphasis on local benefits was a valuable point to community residents and decision-makers. Changes in motivation and trail expansion occurred incrementally when the timing was favorable. Timing was dependent on many things including prior success, public support, committee membership, agency leadership, and funding availability. Motivations varied according to the perspective of the individual, organization, or agency involved. They may promote or hinder a trail's development, leading to action or inaction. In the WGWLT, motivations remained consistent as the primary initiator and trail committee were directly involved throughout the development process. The PFRT was developed through the leadership of the county conservation board and the director influenced motivations. When the paving campaign was developed, motivations were controlled more by the community and less by the director. For the TRT, the original motivations of the city were superseded by the involvement of TOW. The committee accepted leadership for the trail, expanded the trail alignment, and promoted tourism and economic development.

The Statewide Recreational Trails Plan provided incentive for the WGWLT and PFRT as these trails were located in resource corridors. Research information and IDOT publications played an important role in the TRT, particularly with respect to tourism and economic development interests. Availability of financial resources influenced motivations in terms of trail expansion and project development. Changes in federal transportation policy in 1991 increased funding for trails and alternative modes of transportation. State funding for trails increased during the 1990's through programs in the IDOT and IDED. This was the result of legislative directives regarding outdoor recreation, natural resource preservation, and economic development. In some grant programs, trails of regional significance were encouraged.

Uses are consistent among these hard surface multi-use trails. Walking, running, biking, inline skating, and cross-country skiing are primary uses. Fishing is possible along the WGWLT and TRT with the latter providing handicap access. Motorized vehicles are restricted on all trails, however snowmobiling is allowed on a portion of the PFRT to accommodate the local snowmobiling club.

In Table 4.1, various motivations and uses are listed with interpretive assessments for each case. Assessments for motivation were determined as primary or secondary. Interpretations were made according to interview responses and case descriptions. Use assessment was recorded as yes or no. See Table 4.1 for a comparison of motivations and uses among the cases.

Participation and Support

Participation and support reflect the degree of public and private interest in a project. Public participation includes involvement in meetings, committees, and activities. Opposition is also a form of participation. Community support includes fundraising, volunteerism, in-kind services, and project ownership. Awareness refers to public relations and how information is communicated for the trail project. Developing ownership requires an inclusive public process where all stakeholders may meaningfully participate and where outcomes reflect the needs of the community (MDNR 2006, 1.3).

Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail

Participation and support in the WGWLT reflects grassroots activity in trail development.

Table 4.1 Motivations and Uses

Motivation or Use	WGWLT	PFRT	TRT
Motivation			
Community recreation	primary	primary	primary
Health and fitness	secondary	secondary	primary
Quality of life amenity	primary	primary	primary
Safe transportation	primary	secondary	secondary
Historic preservation	primary	secondary	secondary
Education	secondary	secondary	secondary
Tourism/economic development	secondary	secondary	primary
Open space preservation	secondary	secondary	secondary
Environmental protection	primary	secondary	secondary
Rails-to-trails project	yes	yes	no
Use			
Walking	yes	yes	yes
Running	yes	yes	yes
Bicycling	yes	yes	yes
Inline skating	yes	yes	yes
Cross-country skiing	yes	yes	yes
Fishing	yes	no	yes (handicap accessible)
Snowmobiling	no	yes (Cresco to Ridgeway)	no
Motorized vehicles	no	no	no

The vision for the trail began in the mind of a single individual according to committee members. Friends and area residents supportive of the idea formed a committee. More than 30,000 hours and $59,000 have been contributed to the trail project as stated in a grant application. This measure conveys the breadth of public support and is mentioned in funding requests. Volunteers assisted in numerous ways including trail alignment, landowner contact, physical construction, and fundraising. Contributors include active committee members and in-kind supporters of materials and services numbering 20-25 in each category. In small communities such as Riceville, McIntire, and Elma with a combined population of 1,611 residents, citizen participation is important. Quarterly public meetings were held over a period of three years to plan for the completion phase of the trail project.

Awareness of trail progress was maintained through a series of articles in the weekly newspaper, the *Riceville Recorder*. In these articles, individuals and their contributions were publicly recognized. The series appeared on the front page for several years, promoting the trail as a valued community asset. One committee member stated that Elaine Govern does a great deal of promotion through attendance at various meetings and organizational activities. Relocation of historic structures including the church and bridges stimulated interest among residents. The name and logo for the trail were products of community input from two individuals. Community measures of success include the comment "the best thing that has happened to our town," recreation and enjoyment among residents, and active use by former trail opponents.

Opposition to the trail was present from the beginning and arose throughout trail development. In one community, petitions against the trail were filed. Landowners were initially concerned that their land would be taken or condemned for the trail. These issues were addressed by committee members at various public meetings. Members promised that condemnation would not be used and alternatives would be sought when landowners objected. Opposition was based on issues of "not in my back yard," vandalism, litter, and noise. These concerns have abated and many opponents use and support the trail say committee members. One agency representative claimed that opposition originated from a poor perception and understanding of trails by some people. In 2007, the Mitchell County Conservation Board designated an employee to assist in resolving landowner concerns. These actions emphasize the importance of open participation and communication among landowners and trail supporters. In this project, opposition delayed trail completion, interrupted negotiation of trail alignments, and increased total costs.

Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail

The PFRT was developed with controlled participation and limited support. Individuals were selectively chosen for the trail committee by the county conservation board director. Coverage in the media was limited and utilized only when absolute necessary as early public meetings had aroused controversy. Opposition to the trail came from landowners and their attorneys. Local attorneys raised opposition to the trail over the issue of private property rights according an agency representative. Property rights are a sensitive issue and may have

been exploited by legal professionals. Opposition groups did not attend public meetings which brings into question community dynamics and the strength of trail opposition. With multiple communities, opposition may develop in different areas at different times and for different reasons, adding complexity to project planning.

In 2000, the trail was designated a Community Millennium Trail, one of 2000 trail projects nationwide recognized for preserving local history and resources (IDED December 2006). Community participation and support was strong and widespread in the Pave the Way campaign. According to an agency representative, people like to be part of a good project. One comment privately expressed to a supervisor was that the paving project was stupid. The comment was voiced at a public meeting and appeared in the local newspaper but gathered no additional support. Once the trail had been developed, the public grew to appreciate its benefits and value. According to an agency representative, time heals many wounds.

Awareness of the PFRT has changed over time. Originating among opposition from landowners and a lawsuit, the trail received limited support from adjacent communities. During the Pave the Way campaign many years later, interest grew through increased publicity. Public events are held on the trail and a local bike shop organizes weekly rides during the summer. The similarity in name between the Prairie Springs Recreational Trail (PSRT) and the PFRT creates confusion. The PSRT is a three-mile community trail from Cresco to a county park at Vernon Springs. The PFRT is a 20-mile regional rail-trail connecting Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco.

Trout Run Trail

In the TRT, public participation and community support were widespread from the beginning. As a city project, trail development was a public and open process. Awareness was developed through open meetings, city council discussion, chamber of commerce promotion, and a fish hatchery barbeque. Citizen participation increased with involvement from TOW, a trails advocacy group of more than 150 members. Committee members were involved in landowner contacts, trail alignment, and fundraising. In 2006, volunteer efforts on the project exceeded 15,000 hours as stated in a grant application. Landowners were receptive with 24 involved in the final trail alignment. TOW was more effective in working with private landowners than a government entity due to personal connections and trust in the

community. The trail committee maintains a website featuring trail information and project progress. Accessibility promotes community awareness, interest, and ownership. According to one agency representative, public awareness did not keep up well enough as some people developed inaccurate assumptions about the project.

In the context of community history, past controversies regarding street improvements, location of a Walmart Supercenter, and closure of an east side school were divisive as stated by multiple interviewees. The trail project gave residents something positive to rally around and was a healing project for the community. Direct and open communication helped prevent misunderstandings among trail advocates and city businesses impacted by trail development. If any opposition existed, it was not vocal. With a project positively regarded by the majority, opponents may have been reluctant to express their opinions in public.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Though public participation and community support were present in all three projects, they were developed in various ways. Local support is achieved through informing the public and generating enthusiasm for the project (Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality 1975, 23). In the WGWLT, a small committee has been actively involved since the beginning and the trail reflects committee and community interests. For the TRT, a large committee has been extensively involved following initial development by the city. Well organized with many members, TOW was able to assign responsibilities as in the routing committee and contacting of landowners. In the PFRT, committee involvement was active in the latter stages with paving of the trail through the Pave the Way campaign. Trail committee activities were similar among projects and included planning, meetings, fundraising, and publicity. For the WGWLT and TRT, the committee was involved in landowner contact and trail alignment. In the WGWLT, the committee was involved in physical construction and maintenance. These differences are due to trail design, committee membership, and community size.

Public support was developed through cooperation with a government agency. In the WGWLT and PFRT, principal organization was through the county conservation board. In the TRT, the city and the county conservation board shared responsibility for development. Support includes project adoption, funding assistance, construction coordination, and trail

maintenance. Ownership and maintenance is formalized through 28E agreements or memoranda of understanding among communities and counties. Involvement from other entities, public and private, has occurred according to need and opportunity. National Historic Preservation was involved with relocation of the pioneer church for the WGWLT. The PFRT received assistance with deed research from the INHF and funding support from the PSRT committee. The IDNR and Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Management assisted with acquisition and alignments for the TRT. Development timelines varied among the trails and were affected by different factors in each project. Major factors included landowner opposition, funding availability, and project expansion.

Though opposition was significant for two trails, it was addressed with different strategies. In the WGWLT, meetings were held to publicly address landowner issues. When obstacles to trail alignment developed, conflict was avoided and alternative routes pursued. The Mitchell County Conservation Board designated an employee to assist in resolving landowner concerns. Opposition resulted in changes in alignment, delayed completion, and increased costs. In the PFRT, the opposition occurred early with landowner opposition to the county's purchase of the railroad right-of-way. Public meetings were limited and disagreement was resolved through legal processes. Landowners filed a lawsuit but the county conservation board prevailed. The TRT experienced minimal opposition requiring no response from trail advocates. The project was a source of unity for the community given the recent history of divisive controversies. Opposition is aggravated when people feel excluded from participation and may be minimized through direct communication and one-on-one contact.

In Table 4.2, components of public participation, community support, and public awareness are listed. For each component, assessment ratings or word descriptions are provided for each case. Assessment ratings employ a scale of poor, fair, good, and excellent. Word descriptions reflect specific and unique attributes. They are interpretations based on participant interviews and case descriptions. See Table 4.2 for a comparison of public participation, community support, and public awareness.

Table 4.2 Participation and Support

Component	WGWLT	PFRT	TRT
Public Participation			
Meetings	good	poor	good
Committees	excellent	fair	excellent
Activities	good	fair	good
Opposition	McIntire and Acme areas	landowners	negligible
Community Support			
Fundraising	fair	good	excellent
Volunteerism	excellent	good	good
In-kind services	good	fair	good
Ownership	excellent	fair	good
Public Awareness			
Media	articles, trail series	articles	articles
Promotion	seniors tour, events	bike rides	Chamber, barbeque
Signage	poor	good	poor
Recognition	community awards	Millennium Trail (2000)	Iowa Great Places
Education	prairie visions, trailhead	interpretive loop, NICC	algific slopes, fish hatchery
Online publicity	INHF, conservation board	INHF, conservation board	TOW website, DVD, conservation board
Theme	Gateway to Iowa	Prairie Farmer	creek and hatchery
Map/brochure	fair	fair	fair

Actors and Actions

Actor classifications include local, regional, state, and federal participants. Local actors include trail committees, private landowners, city officials, and county boards of supervisors. Agencies and organizations vary according to each project and include chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, parks and recreation departments, and county conservation boards. Regional actors include Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, and Northeast Iowa Tourism Association. State and federal actors include agencies, departments, and nonprofits that provide administrative, technical, and financial assistance. The actions they take impact trail planning, development, and implementation. The most effective trail planning efforts

include extensive public and user involvement and partnerships with transportation officials, planning boards, and user groups (Moore and Ross 1998, 78).

Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail

For the WGWLT, the trail committee was an instrumental actor. The committee formed a vision for the trail and members have labored to make it a reality. Over the course of 20 years, volunteers have contributed more than 30,000 hours and $59,000. Elaine Govern was recognized with an award from NIRCD for her leadership and service to the trail project. The communities along the trail are small with limited resources, requiring greater involvement from individual residents. The attributes of the trail result from the interests and efforts of the committee and volunteers. Members preserved historic structures including a pioneer church, two truss bridges, and reconstruction of a railroad viaduct. Volunteers with gardening interests contributed to development of a butterfly garden, prairie restoration, and memorial avenue of trees. Residents were involved for the greater good in building their community said one committee member. Volunteers have included farmers, teachers, students, business owners, and community leaders. Actions were taken by the committee with respect for local citizens and avoidance of conflict, especially in determining trail alignment. In these rural communities, interpersonal and community relations are highly regarded.

The county conservation boards from Mitchell and Howard counties and their executive directors, Milton Owen and Harold Chapman, have been major players. Each has assisted with land acquisition, funding coordination, project management, and trail maintenance. In the McIntire area, rumors have sparked opposition on multiple occasions and Mitchell County designated an employee to assist in resolving landowner concerns. Howard County coordinated a meeting in which rights-of-way were granted to the county in a single resolution. This avoided the conflict which occurred in Mitchell County where railroad rights-of-way had been purchased by landowners. The trail is owned and maintained by the county conservation boards.

Other actors include National Historic Preservation for funding the relocation of the historic pioneer church. Congressman Tom Latham helped to secure a federal earmark. State agencies involved in funding include the IDED, IDOT, and IDNR. The state agencies are

important in providing funds for implementation, especially for rural counties with small populations and limited public resources.

Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail

The major actors in the PFRT were the Winneshiek County Conservation Board and its executive director. The county conservation board system is unique to Iowa and is involved in many types of resource conservation and outdoor recreation activities. A trail advisory committee was formed to work with the county conservation board. Committee members were invited to participate by the director. Organizational involvement at the county level allowed for rapid completion of the initial crushed limestone trail. The board is responsible for county recreational resources and owns and maintains the trail. Opposition forces included private landowners and their attorneys manifesting in a lawsuit against the county conservation board and its director. Landowners believed that they owned the land and contested the county's purchase of the right-of-way from the railroad corporation. Private property rights are a sensitive issue among rural landowners.

Many years later, the communities of Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco formed a committee to pave the trail. The Pave the Way committee raised local funds and searched for grants. By this time, opposition to the trail had subsided as fears of vandalism, litter, and noise had not materialized. The project proceeded rapidly with definitive action from decision-makers, manageable logistics, and favorable timing. The Winneshiek County Conservation Board used its authority and mission to best advantage. Prior to the paving campaign, a hard surface community recreational trail had been constructed from Cresco to Vernon Springs Park. The Prairie Springs Recreational Trail was valued by residents in providing safe transportation for children riding bicycles to the Turkey River.

Economic development directors exhibited interest in creating a 100-mile trail, the seventh such trail in the country. Connection would be from the PFRT to the Harmony and Preston Valley State Trail in Minnesota. The two states are working together and Congressman Tom Latham is sponsoring a federal earmark. Involvement from economic development organizations influence trail evolution from local projects to regional systems. A rail-trail from Conover to Decorah is being considered to connect the PFRT and TRT. Lora Friest, Coordinator of NIRCD, has been extensively involved in grant writing stated an

agency representative. The combination of actors, with their roles and contributions, greatly influence the success or failure of any trail project.

Trout Run Trail

The variety of actors in the TRT was large due to the complexity of the project. The City of Decorah was involved through the city council, city manager, city engineer, and parks and recreation department. As the project expanded beyond the city limits to the fish hatchery, the Winneshiek County Conservation Board and Iowa Department of Natural Resources became involved. The local trail committee took on a major role in terms of trail alignment, landowner contacts, and fundraising. They focused on destinations and how to connect them in determining the final route. Two committee members made all the landowner contacts. Contacts by volunteers are preferable to contacts by agency representatives. Trust and passion are the difference and "private landowners are the holy grail of trails," said one committee member. The trail committee consisted of businessmen and professionals interested in tourism and economic development. Winneshiek County Development was involved in grant writing and funding procurement. The Decorah Chamber of Commerce was active in marketing the trail in publications and information releases.

Development of the TRT involved complex decisions as the alignment did not follow existing railroad infrastructure. Numerous technical and engineering challenges were addressed in the project. The city engineer was pivotal in preparing specifications, coordinating construction, and orchestrating funding. Availability of funds and community recognition of the project's value contributed to expansion. Assistance from NIRCD in grant identification and writing was important in securing financial resources. "Lora Friest's involvement in grant writing, visioning, and planning made it happen," stated one committee member. The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative was recognized for its role in promoting regionalism among counties. The level of cooperation resulting from this initiative had not existed previously remarked a committee member. The Minnesota State Trail Use summary was useful for statistical data and IDOT publications were valuable for economic development planning. One committee member frequently referenced trail publications, bringing current research findings to the trail project. This was important in creating a trail that meets user needs and expectations based on relevant data and historical experience.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Actors were similar among the trails but roles varied according to project jurisdiction. Citizen committees were active in all three cases but at different times and for varying durations. The role of a trail organization is advocacy, defending it when necessary and promoting it the rest of the time (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy 2009). For the WGWLT, the committee was active for the entire duration of trail development. In the PFRT, the initial committee was advisory whereas the paving committee represented the interests of the community. In the TRT, the committee possessed strength in numbers and was able to delegate tasks among members. In the WGWLT and PFRT, the county conservation board was the primary public actor. In these trails, most of the alignment was located within county jurisdictions. In the TRT, the city played a dominant role as trail development was first initiated by the municipality and the project was managed by the city engineer. The most significant regional actor was NIRCD for assistance in planning, visioning, and grant writing. Lora Friest's success in preparing grant applications accelerated development among all three projects.

State actors were important for technical assistance and sources of funding. These include IDOT, IDNR, and IDED. IDOT administers the State Recreational Trails and Regional Enhancement grant programs. IDNR provides Resource Enhancement and Protection grants to cities and counties. IDED sponsors the Community Attraction and Tourism and Iowa Great Places grant programs. Grant sources are competitive and Northeast Iowa has received awards from various programs. Private nonprofit assistance from the INHF was most significant for the PFRT in terms of legal research.

Federal actors include the Federal Highway Administration with programs administered by the state such as Transportation Enhancements. Federal Recreational Trails funding was utilized by all trails. A congressional earmark was used in the WGWLT and one is proposed for regional linkages in the PFRT. The National Historic Preservation program was utilized for relocation and renovation of the Riceville Baptist Church in the WGWLT. Located among small rural communities with limited resources, the WGWLT was more dependent on financial assistance from external sources.

In Table 4.3, actors are identified according to local, regional, state, and federal categories. The specific actions are listed according to each trail project. The breadth or extent of individual actor involvement is not represented in the table. See Table 4.3 for a comparison of actors and actions among the cases.

Table 4.3 Actors and Actions

Actor	**WGWLT**	**PFRT**	**TRT**
Local			
Public citizens	meetings, volunteers	meetings, volunteers	meetings, volunteers
Trail committee	citizens committee	advisory committee, Pave the Way committee	Trails of Winneshiek
City officials	Riceville, Elma, McIntire	Calmar, Ridgeway, Cresco	Decorah
County officials	Howard, Mitchell	Howard, Winneshiek	Winneshiek
County conservation boards	Howard, Mitchell	Howard, Winneshiek	Winneshiek
Economic development corporations			grant writing
Institutions		NE IA Community College	Luther College
Regional			
Upper Explorerland RPC			
Northeast Iowa RC&D	planning, grant writing	planning, grant writing	planning, grant writing
Northeast Iowa Tourism Association	promotion	promotion	promotion
State			
Iowa Dept. of Transportation	funding (SRT, RE), technical assistance	funding (SRT, RE), technical assistance	funding (SRT, RE), technical assistance
Iowa Dept. of Economic Development	funding (CAT)	funding (CAT)	funding (CAT), Iowa Great Places
Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources	funding (REAP)	funding (REAP)	funding (REAP), Department of Fisheries
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation		technical assistance	
Federal			
Federal Recreational Trails program	funding	funding	funding
National Register of Historic Places	Riceville Baptist Church		
United States Congress	federal earmark	federal earmark (proposed)	

Funding and Implementation

The sources of funding and strategies for implementation are similar among the three cases. Funding sources include local, regional, state, and federal sources. Categories of funding include acquisition, development, and maintenance (Fiala 1999, 67). Implementation refers to preparation of design documents, project scheduling, construction coordination, and funding orchestration. Acquisition of funds, construction coordination, and implementation timelines vary among all trail projects.

Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail

In the WGWLT, funding was assembled through a variety of sources. Local fundraising has been active and ongoing throughout the trail's history. More than $59,000 has been raised by the committee. Events have included bake sales, public dinners, bicycle rides, and musical concerts. Extensive contributions have been made in terms of in-kind support for materials and labor. The first attempt at state funding in the form of a State Recreational Trails grant was highly ranked but not funded due to a state budget shortfall. State funding has included REAP and State Recreational Trails grants. Application to the Iowa Great Places program in 2007 was unsuccessful. A $1.3 million Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism grant was received in 2008. Federal funding has included a Recreational Trails grant and multiple Transportation Enhancement grants. A congressional earmark of $2.3 million was received in 2005. Relocation and adaptive reuse of the Riceville Baptist Church was completed through a $350,000 grant from National Historic Preservation awarded in 1995.

Funding assisted in the development of trail amenities and special features. These include historic structures, prairie restoration, and memorials. The trail committee remains active in fundraising, maintenance, and trail improvement. Linkage to the Shooting Star Trail is not complete though state resolutions have been made, delaying claim as the first interstate trail connection between Iowa and Minnesota. Lack of connection to other trails in Minnesota and Iowa limits benefits from tourism and economic development. The WGWLT is incomplete as alignment negotiation and asphalt paving remain for several miles south of Riceville.

Limited resources at critical times extended the process of trail implementation and increased construction costs.

Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail

Initial funding for the PFRT included local and state funds. Funding has been actively solicited in two distinct time periods; in the early 1990's for initial construction and in the mid 2000's for asphalt surfacing. Initial sources included $159,750 in State Recreational Trail grants. The first phase was completed in three years, from original idea to creation of a crushed limestone trail. Development was coordinated through the county conservation board. The trail's simplicity in terms of physical geography, rail bed infrastructure, and singular ownership accelerated completion. Timing of grant funding expedited development.

Many years later, collaboration among the communities of Cresco, Ridgway, and Calmar resulted in the second phase of development through the Pave the Way campaign. Increases in sales revenue in communities along the Root River State Trail in Minnesota influenced paving decisions. Supporters realized that the trail must be paved in sufficient length to benefit from economic development. Community support was strong for the paving project with committee fundraising totaling $150,000 and $310,000 from city and county governments. An agency representative suggested that rivalry among the communities of the PFRT and Decorah may have had a stimulating impact as they were raising money simultaneously. Apparently, the smaller communities did not want to be outdone by the larger community.

State funding consisted of $150,000 in city Resource Enhancement and Protection grants and a $593,668 Community Attraction and Tourism grant in 2006. Federal funding included multiple Transportation Enhancement grants through the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21). Favorable timing and successful grant applications catapulted the project forward. Trail connections were completed to Cresco and the PSRT in conjunction with the asphalt paving. This capitalized on public interest and improved efficiency in physical operations. Condensing development in two short time periods reduced fatigue among supporters and contributed to project momentum. This is confirmed in the rapidity of completion and absence of major delays in both phases of trail development.

Trout Run Trail

The TRT has been funded through a diverse collection of programs and sources. In 1995, the city initiated development to improve existing recreational resources. The first two segments were completed by the Decorah Parks and Recreation Department. Completed in 14 segments, only three segments totaling three miles remain. The trail expanded significantly in the course of planning and development. TOW was formed in 2001 and promoted connection to the fish hatchery. During this time, the project gained public awareness, participation, and support. Following controversial issues in the past, the trail was a unifying and positive force in the community. The trail committee raised $1.3 million in local fundraising.

In 2005, planning expanded to create a peripheral loop trail as a community amenity. City and county government provided $781,850 and $802,220 respectively. State funds include a State Recreational Trails grant and $600,000 in city and county Resource Enhancement and Protection grants. A $1.6 million Community Attraction and Tourism grant was awarded in 2006. The trail received $490,000 from the Iowa Great Places program with $100,000 dedicated for durable art to foster community creativity, ownership, and pride. Federal funding included Transportation Enhancement and Recreational Trail grants. A grant of $128,500 was received from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. According to committee members, success in grant applications was due to assistance from Lora Friest, Coordinator of NIRCD.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Funding sources were generally similar but assembled in different combinations for each case. Total funding amounts varied according to trail alignments, engineering challenges, length of trail, timing of development, and community resources. The PFRT was developed rapidly and at the least cost. The TRT was the most expensive due to land values and technical challenges. Grant funds are competitive and judged according to multiple criteria. In some ways, trail evolution and development was patterned after grant criteria, particularly regarding regional linkages and resource enhancements. This was most evident in the Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism grant program. Assistance in grant writing from NIRCD was common to all projects. Lora Friest's expertise in securing grant funding

contributed to successful implementation. Orchestration of funding is critical to prevent construction interruptions and cancellation of awards. Lack of funds at critical times was a significant problem for the WGWLT. The PFRT benefited from concentrated activity in two distinct and short time periods. Coordination was efficient in the TRT with the city engineer managing construction scheduling and grants administration.

Individual funding was received from National Historic Preservation for the WGWLT and Iowa Great Places and Iowa Department of Natural Resources for the TRT. Maintenance funding has been identified for the trails through county conservation board approval and 28E agreements as appropriate. Maintenance costs range from $500-$1500 per mile per year. Total trail development costs are variable and fluctuate according to trail complexities, cost of materials, and economic conditions. Costs per mile for a hard surface rail-trail are estimated at $200,000-$250,000 and $350,000-$400,000 for a hard surface non rail-trail (Lisa Hein, personal communication).

In Table 4.4, funding sources are listed according to local, regional, state, and federal categories. Specific amounts and dates are entered for each trail as appropriate. Some sources were not accessed for all trail projects, depending upon need, eligibility, and application success. See Table 4.4 for a comparison of funding and implementation among projects.

Amenities and Resources

Amenities and resources are important in attracting users and creating a trail experience. An amenity is anything that increases enjoyment or adds to the value of the trail experience. Resources may be natural, historical, cultural, educational, or technological. They vary for each trail according to community involvement, geographic location, and existing conditions. They include attributes and design, features and linkages, and services and facilities.

Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail

In the WGWLT, amenities include nature, history, culture, technology, and art. Nature is featured in native prairie, wetlands and marsh, and woodlands including Pinicon Alders State Preserve. These features are within or adjacent to the trail. Prairie Visions is a prairie restoration designed to provide education on prairie plants for trail users and school children. Wetland elements include a boardwalk for close observation and the 140-acre wildlife area at Lylah’s Marsh. Pinicon Alders State Preserve is a 320-acre plant community of hazelnut and

Table 4.4 Funding and Implementation

Funding Source	WGWLT	PFRT	TRT
Local			
City	$16,000	$90,000 (2006)	$781,850 (2006)
County	$310,000	$220,000 (2006)	$802,200 (2006)
Committee fundraising	$59,000	$150,000	$1,300,000
Gifts and donations	benches, trees, plants		
In-kind support	$105,775 (2008)	labor	$268,200 (2006)
Regional			
State			
State Recreational Trails	$126,515 (1991)	$52,500 (1990)	$138,088 (2008)
	$28,537 (1994)	$107,250 (1992)	
REAP city	$31,350 (1996)	$150,000 (2006)	$100,000 (2005)
			$100,000 (2009)
REAP county			$150,000 (2005)
			$250,000 (2009)
Community Attraction and Tourism	$1,300,000 (2008)	$593,668 (2006)	$1,600,000 (2006)
Iowa Great Places program			$290,000 (2007)
			$200,000 (2009)
Federal			
Federal Transportation Enhancement	$126.800 (1996)	$100,000 (2004)	$78,220 (2003)
	$49,600 (1997)	$200,000 (2005)	
	$128,000 (1999)	$100,000 (2006)	
	$194,400 (2003)		
	$296,000 (2007)		
Federal Recreational Trails	$60,922 (1992)		$95,000 (2005)
Congressional earmarks	$2,300,000 (2005)		
National Register of Historic Places	$350,000 (1995)		
US Fish and Wildlife Service			$128,500

alder trees. Preservation of historic features is evident in the pioneer church, truss bridges, and railroad viaduct. Listed in the National Register, the historic Riceville Baptist Church was built in 1858 and was supported by the family for whom Riceville was named. The truss bridges represent local pioneer settlement and period technology. The railroad viaduct is a visual reference to the railroad era with timber bridging and 25-foot stone supports.

Old Order Amish and Mennonite farms add a traditional cultural dimension. Turbines of the Horizon Wind Farm represent renewable energy technology, a contrast to the old world traditions of the religious communities. Art works include the Brown Opera Block stage curtains and Isabel Moore Kimball's paintings and sculpture. Fieldstone sculptures will be added to the trail to add visual interest. Area attractions include the Hayden Prairie State Preserve and the Cedar Valley Produce Auction. Amenities of the WGWLT feature local history as the main attraction. The combination of modern and traditional provides a unique dimension to the trail. According to an agency representative, this contrast is something like a "twilight zone" in its juxtaposition.

Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail

Amenities along the PFRT include natural, historic, and cultural assets. The trail's name references to native prairie and agricultural landscapes. Trailhead kiosks will feature information on prairie plants including preservation and restoration practices. Balk Park includes native plantings, a water feature, and gazebo. The trail corridor, prairie remnants, and farm fields preserve open space within an ecological greenway. Railroad history is depicted in the Calmar railroad depot, interpretive trail loop, and Cresco's Beadle Park. The interpretive loop features signs and symbols important in railroad communications. Railroad origins are evident in this rail-to-trail project that follows the right-of-way for most of its length.

Cultural and artistic assets include the Cresco Opera House and bronze sculptures throughout Cresco. Educational resources include the Northeast Iowa Community College and Northeast Iowa Dairy Center in Calmar. Recreational assets include Lake Meyer Park, Calmar's public swimming pool, and Cresco's Fitness Center. Services for dining and lodging vary among the three communities. Area attractions include Fort Atkinson State Preserve and Bily Clocks Museum and Antonin Dvorak Exhibit in Spillville. Festivals include Calmar Farmer's Day and Fort Atkinson Rendezvous Days. Though the trail has a moderate level of amenities and resources, its location is ideal for connection with other trails as part of a regional trail system.

Trout Run Trail

The TRT exhibits quality and diversity in its amenities and resources. Natural resources include the Upper Iowa River, trout streams, coldwater springs, fish hatchery, native prairie, and limestone bluffs. The Upper Iowa River is the only river in Iowa eligible for designation as a wild and scenic river. A total of 29 coldwater trout streams flow into the river and provide excellent trout fishing. The hatchery raises more than 100,000 trout each year including brook, brown, and rainbow species. Algific talus slopes, cold air drainages featuring unique vegetation and wildlife, intersect the trail along the old Dug Road segment. History is recalled in the bowstring bridge and the hatchery complex built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The limestone structures were built in the 1930's and modernized in 1989.

Artistic resources include trail sculpture and various venues in Decorah. Three major sculptures have been commissioned for placement along the trail. Luther College provides opportunities for education, fine art, and performance art. A self-guided studio tour features more than 25 area artists. Recreation opportunities include 17 miles of mountain bike trails and the Upper Iowa River water trail for canoeing, kayaking, and tubing. Area attractions include the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Porter House Museum, and Broadway Historical District in Decorah. Close to Decorah are the Seed Savers Exchange and Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum. Major festivals include Nordic Fest which reflects the Scandinavian cultural heritage and the Live on Winnebago street fair for world music. Tens of thousands of people attend the multi-day heritage festival each year.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Each trail provides a distinct combination of resources and amenities. The natural resources are a priority among all three projects. Historical resources are emphasized in the WGWLT. Cultural resources are particularly strong in the WGWLT and TRT. Educational resources are strongest in the TRT with Luther College in Decorah. Recreational resources are most diverse in the TRT with an extensive network of mountain bike trails and the Upper Iowa River water trail. Technological resources include alternative energy in the WGWLT and hatchery operations in the TRT. Artistic resources are represented in the collections of the WGWLT and sculptural works of the TRT. Services are most limited along the WGWLT,

moderate on the PFRT, and plentiful for the TRT due to community size and prosperity. Area attractions represent various interests and are numerous for each trail. The name of the trail reflects major emphases: river and railroad assets for the WGWLT, prairie environment for the PFRT, and trout streams and fish hatchery for the TRT.

Regional trails create linkages and connect natural, historical, and cultural resources. Additional resources include recreation, education, technology, and art. Services and facilities are important in meeting the needs of trail users, current and projected. Amenities and resources are the reasons why a person decides to use a particular trail and reflect personal preferences. They are the basis for creating a unique user experience and give the trail its "personality." Preference studies indicate users make distinctions among trails based on their perception of value (MDNR 2006, 2.1). Recreational value is most important in predicting use and is maximized through a scenic natural setting away from traffic and development, variety of experiences among numerous destinations, and continuity with few impediments to travel.

According to Tom Neenan, Executive Director of the Iowa Trails Council, Iowa is a great place for trail recreation: "Sandwiched between two of the nation's major rivers, Iowa offers a surprising variety of seasons. The state's rolling terrain can provide both leisurely rides and real outdoor adventure. Many delightful trails can be found in Iowa's state and county parks while other trails act as connectors of these parks or link together metropolitan areas. There are many and various attractions along the way to satisfy most any interest, from museums to covered bridges, from casinos to racing tracks, from fall festivals to movie making sites. No matter where you go we believe you will find friendly faces and the welcome mat will always be out" (Hoven 2008, 13).

In Table 4.5, amenity and resource categories include natural, historical, cultural, educational, recreational, technological, artistic, services, and area attractions. Specific examples listed for each trail include those directly along the trail or located within close proximity. Area attractions include sites near the trail corridor. See Table 4.5 for a comparison of amenities and resources.

Table 4.5 Amenities and Resources

Amenity/Resource	WGWLT	PFRT	TRT
Natural	native prairie, farmland, wetland, woodland, garden	farmland, native prairie, trailside woodland	bluffs, river, stream, springs, woodland, prairie, city parks
Historical	pioneer church, truss bridges, Rossiter photo gallery, James Fellows Home, fossil collection	railroad depot, Beadle Park, interpretive loop	bridge, industry, fish hatchery, Broadway Historical District
Cultural	Amish and Mennonite farms	Cresco Opera House	multiple venues
Educational	Welcome Center	NE IA Community College	Luther College
Recreational		Cresco Fitness Center, Calmar swimming pool	mountain bike trails, water trail, public swimming pool
Technological	Horizon Wind Farm		fish hatchery
Artistic	paintings, sculpture, stage curtains, fieldstone art	bronze sculptures	trail sculpture
Services/Facilities	groceries, campground	groceries, food, lodging, bike shop, nature center	groceries, food, lodging, campground, bike shops
Area attractions	Hayden Prairie State Preserve, Cedar Valley Produce Auction	Fort Atkinson State Preserve, Bily Clocks Museum and Antonin Dvorak Exhibit	Vesterheim Museum, Porter House Museum, Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, Seed Savers Exchange

Within the analysis of themes, a variety of issues were identified in this study. They include trail alignment and landowner negotiation, legal concerns for right-of-ways and easements, trail visioning and master planning, coordination and orchestration of activities, fundraising and fiscal strategies, maintenance agreements and appropriations, and regional trail development strategies. These issues represent topics for further research and exploration. Issues of consequence outside the realm of this study include procedural techniques for rail-to-trail conversions and marketing of regional trail systems.

4.4 Trail Planning Influences

In Northeast Iowa, several influences have impacted regional trail planning. These influences include the Root River State Trail, Statewide Recreational Trails Plan, existing plans, funding sources, and Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative. Each has affected trail development among the three cases in similar ways.

Root River State Trail

In Minnesota, trail development has been coordinated by the Department of Natural Resources. The Root River State Trail in southeastern Minnesota is one of the most popular trails and serves as a model for tourist destination trails. Located among comparable geography and natural resources, Northeast Iowa trails are expected to receive similar use and benefits. The success of this trail is evident in terms of tourism and economic development. Increased sales tax revenue in Lanesboro is frequently referenced in promoting trails as an economic development strategy. These increases occurred after sections of the trail were asphalt paved with businesses reporting a seven percent annual growth rate in sales. See Figure 4.1 for sales revenue from 1977 through 2003 in Lanesboro, Minnesota.

The Root River State Trail is a destination trail drawing users from more than 90 miles away and the primary reason why tourists visit the area. According to the Minnesota State Trail Use summary, only six percent of users come from within 10 miles and 34 percent travel from out of state (MDNR 2000). Communities along Northeast Iowa trails expect to gain part of this recreational market and improve their economic status. According to Mark Edwards, Trails Coordinator with the IDNR, "For the Root River State Trail, the whole context of the landscape is the draw including human, historical, and natural attractions," (Mark Edwards, personal communication). The Iowa trails in this study feature extensive natural, historical, and cultural resources. In the words of an agency representative, the city of Decorah provides a higher plateau of services compared to any community along the Root River State Trail.

Statewide Recreational Trails Plan (Statewide Trails Vision)

The Statewide Recreational Trails Plan is the basis for trail implementation in Iowa. Its goal is to connect communities, parks, natural resources, shopping, employment, and amenities with a comprehensive, accessible, and multi-modal trails system (IDNR 2001). In the 1988 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan, 26 issues were identified including development of a statewide trails program: "The time has arrived in Iowa to examine existing trails and to explore opportunities for the development of new ones from a statewide perspective. This investigation and development of priorities and state policy are necessary in

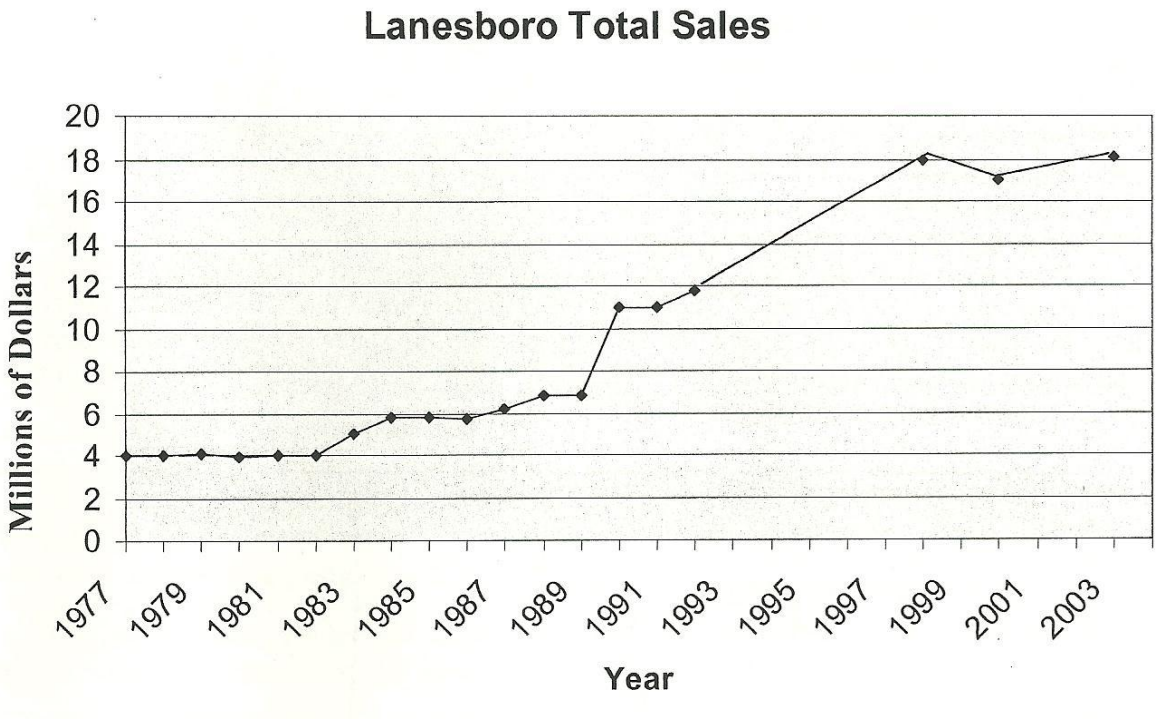

Figure 4.1 Lanesboro Total Sales. Source: Community Attraction and Tourism grant application, PFRT, December 2006.

order to efficiently develop a quality trails system. Substantial funds and manpower will undoubtedly be required to accomplish this goal. Statewide support for such expenditures seems to exist. The preparation of a statewide trails plan is the first step in developing such a system" (IDNR 1988, 4.20).

The first Statewide Recreational Trails Plan completed in 1990 recommended a 2,982-mile network, 400 of which were already in place. Revised in 2000, the plan proposes 4,908 miles of trails with 517 miles existing (IDOT 2001). The plan identifies potential conceptual corridors, connection points, and routes based on a statewide inventory of resources. Landscape corridors incorporate rivers and streams, topography, natural vegetation, natural

and cultural features, and population centers (Brower and Ohlerking 1973, 18). The statewide inventory of natural, cultural, and recreational resources was completed with assistance from the 18 Regional Planning Affiliates and eight Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The plan was mentioned as an influence for the two trail projects that began in 1990 by committee members and agency representatives. The state plan identified resource corridors which were eventually adopted by local communities as trail projects. *Iowa Trails 2000* is a resource guide featuring guidelines, policies, and recommendations for implementing the Statewide Recreational Trails Plan of a comprehensive network of multi-modal trails.

Existing Plans

Integration and alignment with existing plans is important in trail development and funding applications (MDNR 2006, 1.8). Plans of significance include city and county comprehensive plans, county conservation board plans, Iowa Open Spaces Plan, and Iowa Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. In the city of Decorah's comprehensive plan, an adopted policy reads, "A system of bikeways and trails to link parks, recreation areas, and schools with residential areas should be established during the planning period" (IDED March 2006). The Decorah Parks and Recreation Department has identified trails as their number one priority. Trails figure prominently in immediate and long-term needs in county conservation board plans and five-year county REAP plans (IDED December 2006). Once established, trails attract attention as additional projects are proposed for integration into a regional trails system. This is occurring throughout the study area, particularly in Fayette County at present.

The 1988 Iowa Open Spaces Plan promotes collaboration among governmental agencies and private organizations to protect Iowa's open spaces. The plan strives to enhance quality of life, increase tourism opportunities, maintain natural diversity, provide opportunities for future generations, and enhance areas for rare and unique ecosystems (IDOT 2005). Goals include increasing public opportunities to use, enjoy, and benefit from Iowa's open protected spaces and protection of land containing natural resources. "Such activities serve as a diversion from work or regular activities, provide physical fitness, and refresh the spirit or mind. Socializing is often an integral part of this recreational enjoyment" (Cross 2005, 137).

Government agencies and private organizations are encouraged to work together in preserving open space.

The 2001 Iowa Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was developed by the Parks, Recreation, and Preserves Division of the IDNR in accordance with the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (IDNR 2009). SCORP is a comprehensive evaluation of outdoor recreation supply, demand, and priorities in the state of Iowa. Future recreational opportunities should focus on attracting people of all ages and improving the health and wellness of Iowans. Travel and tourism in Iowa equates to a substantial economic stimulus through dollars spent, jobs created, and tax revenues collected. Recreational activities with the highest participation rates include nature walks and hiking, nature study such as bird watching, and picnicking. Commonly inhibited activities due to limited resources include biking on paved trails, hiking, and nature walks. In the plan's Outdoor Recreational Resources and Facilities Inventory, trail miles increased from 2977 in 1995 to 3664 in 2000, a 23.1 percent increase (IDNR 2001). The three projects in this study provide 60 miles of recreational trail with multiple benefits to individuals and communities.

Funding Sources

Funding sources include a variety of local, regional, state, and federal programs. Local funds are generated through city councils, county boards of supervisors, county conservation boards, community foundations, private donations, and fundraising activities. Regional sources include grants, councils of government, and resource conservation and development districts. State funding for trail development is appropriated by the Iowa Legislature. Sources include the General Fund and Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund. Grant programs include State Recreational Trails, Recreation Infrastructure, Resource Enhancement and Protection, Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism, and Iowa Great Places. The Iowa Road Use Tax Fund obtains monies from the state gas tax and may be used only for trails constructed within road right-of-ways.

A major change in federal transportation policy in the late 1980's led to funding for alternative, multi-modal, regional enhancement projects (Moore and Ross 1998, 76). Federal funding for trails is available through the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21). The current version of this legislation passed in 2005 is the Safe,

Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Appropriations are made to each state and may be used for a variety of transportation enhancements. These funds are prioritized by the Iowa Department of Transportation, Regional Planning Affiliates, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Funding may be available from the Federal Recreational Trails program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, both administered by the state (IDNR 2001). Congressional earmarks are another source of federal funds. Each trail project in this study has utilized a variety of funding sources, including most of the above.

Grant applications request specific information that may impact project planning and development. In addition to the standard application form, Community Attraction and Tourism grants require an executive summary, threshold eligibility, and evaluation criteria. Threshold eligibility includes applicant eligibility, local support, financial need, vertical infrastructure, and employee benefits. Evaluation criteria, based on a total score of 100 points, include feasibility, economic impact, leveraged activity, matching funds, planning principles, and technology and values. These application documents require coordinated planning, support, and funding in the trail project. Lora Friest, Coordinator of NIRCD, has been successful in securing grant funding for the projects studied.

Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative

The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative is a grant program sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. In 2007, Northeast Iowa was one of nine areas in the country awarded a $500,000 planning grant (Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative 2009). Components of the initiative include farmers markets, recreational activities, health education, and food production. A goal is to develop “healthy eating, active living” community lifestyles. Collaborators included Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Leopold Center at Iowa State University, and Cooperative Extension Service in Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties. Application has been made for implementation grants, ranging from $200,000-$500,000 each year for the next eight years. These funds must be used for system and policy changes and working as a region improves competitiveness in grant applications.

The program may serve as a national model for rural food systems and physical fitness infrastructure. Trails are complementary to a community's health and fitness infrastructure. County and regional teams and specialized committees have created linkages and relationships that did not previously exist according to an agency representative. "County representatives tend to be more territorial and engage in siloing of resources," stated Co-facilitator Brenda Ranum (Brenda Ranum, personal communication). Regional agency representatives have encountered problems meeting demands for assistance from individual counties. Barriers have been broken down and counties no longer see themselves as unique entities. The program has fostered interest in regional cooperation and collaboration as well as promotion of economic development and quality of life issues throughout Northeast Iowa. Trails are recognized as assets in this regional evolution of perspectives and values.

Multiple external influences come into play in the process of trail planning and development. A supportive environment for trail development was fostered through a chain of events including creation of the trails movement, legislation regarding abandoned rail lines, trail and recreation studies, state interest in trail planning, and revisions in federal transportation policy. Though referenced in this study, their degree of influence is difficult to assess. They provided the foundation upon which trail development was possible and publicly encouraged. Internal factors are found within the communities themselves. Most important are the individuals and organizations with their respective motivations and roles. Community capacities and resources influenced the design, scope, and complexity of trail projects. The cause for trail development arose from within communities while outside forces provided support. As local projects, each trail was developed according to the preferences and idiosyncrasies of the community.

4.5 Study Limitations

Limitations in the confidence of findings in this study are influenced by many factors. The record of historical documentation for these trails is fragmented and incomplete. Knowing the right people to contact and the proper sources to investigate were challenges. Reconciling erroneous or incongruous information was problematic. Among grant applications and written documents, authors may have edited out important information to

place the projects in better standing. Triangulation among multiple sources is important for validity but does not ensure truth in the findings. During participant interviews, interviewees may have selective bias in answering questions, poor recall over extensive time periods, and the inability to articulate adequate responses.

The knowledge and experience of the researcher impacts the study and its conclusions. Lack of familiarity with the study area, its residents, and recent history may limit one's appreciation for the setting and context. For the investigator, asking good questions, listening carefully, and following up properly are acquired skills. Investigator bias is a consideration in data interpretation, categorization, and analysis. Understanding the process of trail planning and development in other areas may influence a researcher's perception of the realities in the cases being studied.

As the trail projects are presently in development, accumulated records of use and measures of success are not available. At some point, this type of evaluative information may add credibility to the current findings and provide opportunities for further research. Possible measures may include use statistics, user demographics, tourism revenue, and economic impacts.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Research Summary

The central question in this study is why and how did these local trail projects evolve to become regional destination trails? Subquestions are issue and procedural in nature and include the following: What were the motivations and purposes for these trails and how did they impact development? How was public awareness and support developed for these projects? Who were the actors in the planning process and what actions did they take? What sources of funding were used and how did they impact outcomes? What amenities and resources were important for them to become regional trails?

Findings

Motivations for trails began with a local desire for community recreation. A clear purpose was important in developing initial public support. Motivations evolved during project development and reflected the interests of various individuals and organizations. Motivations impacted trail planning and development by defining purposes, creating priorities, and confirming uses. They ultimately determine whether a trail remains local or becomes part of a regional system. When tourism and economic development becomes a primary motivation, a hard surface multi-use trail linking communities and resources is developed.

Participation needs to be a public and open process in the community. Public participation engages stakeholders and community support promotes ownership. Understanding the costs and benefits is important in generating widespread public support. With limited funds for trail development, local fundraising and volunteerism are critical. Public relations foster awareness and keep the public informed of progress. Dissemination of information and media coverage should be transparent and constant. Contacts with affected landowners are best done personally and in private by citizen committees. Consideration and resolution of landowner concerns is necessary in obtaining their cooperation and support.

Trail projects include a combination of private and public actors including individuals, organizations, agencies, and government officials. Actors and the actions they take are influenced by their motivation and role. Stakeholders and user groups should be identified and involved from the beginning. Resources brought to bear on a project are reflective of the

public and private entities involved. Compromise and adjustment among differing objectives often leads to a better result in terms of project design and implementation. Actors may be self-serving in their actions but the welfare of the community generally prevails.

Multiple sources of funding are usually needed for implementation. Funding sources include local, regional, state, and federal sources and influence implementation timelines. Grants are competitive and judged according to multiple criteria. Project planning needs to consider grant requirements and adapt accordingly. Local fundraising is essential in meeting required local matches for grant funds. Orchestration of funding is critical to prevent development interruptions and award cancellations. Coordination of funding requirements and deadlines is best achieved through a single public entity or project manager. Timing of funding awards is important for developing phases of a project in an organized way.

Amenities and resources are important in attracting users and creating destination trails. They vary according to community involvement, geographic location, and existing conditions. Regional trails create linkages and connect natural, historical, and cultural resources. For most recreational trails, the natural resources are the most important feature. Amenities and resources determine why a person decides to use a trail and are the basis for creating a unique user experience. Communities must be able to provide adequate services and facilities for trail users. Facilities, services, signage, and information create a user friendly environment.

Similarities and Differences

In all three cases, trail development began as a local project organized by community residents, in an official or voluntary capacity. Participants included private citizens, businesspersons, organization representatives, and government leaders. Development of a public recreational resource and quality of life improvement are common to all three cases. Implementation occurred in phases depending on the complexity of the trail project. Funding resources were similar for all trails but assembled differently according to need and timing. Timelines were impacted by funding availability, community size, and opposition forces.

For the WGWLT, commitment and dedication of the trail committee was paramount in the successful completion of the trail. Volunteers contributed more than 30,000 hours and $59,000 in various aspects of trail development. This is particularly noteworthy given the

area's population and economic status. In the PFRT, leadership from the county conservation board director was critical in its initial development. Advantages of an intact rail bed, suitable geography, and favorable timing contributed to rapid completion. The central location of the trail provides opportunity for connection with other trails. The TRT involved multiple actors and their respective motivations. A peripheral loop trail with urban and rural components, it features linkages among numerous public and private resources. Proximate to mountain bike trails, water trail access, and trout streams, it has broad appeal among diverse users.

A variety of external influences impacted the development of trails in Iowa. Creation of the rails-to-trails movement and rail banking legislation spurred trail development in many Midwestern states. Preparation of Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plans stimulated interest in trails and led to the development of a Statewide Recreational Trails Plan. Though the plan only provided recommendations, interest and demand for trails increased throughout the state. Changes in federal transportation policy promoted multi-modal systems including funding for trails. From this foundation, internal forces in various communities led to specific trail projects. These forces included individuals and organizations, public and private support, and community capacities and resources. Funding sources increased in availability at federal, state, and local levels. In the context of these interacting influences, the timing was conducive for local and regional trail development.

5.2 Implications for Planning

Contributions to Literature

This study contributes to the literature on trail planning and development by addressing the evolution of local projects into regional trail systems. Areas of investigation included motivations and uses, participation and support, actors and actions, funding and implementation, and amenities and resources. Though the study examined three projects in Northeast Iowa, the results may be transferable to other projects in the study area, state of Iowa, and the United States. The study confirms aspects of trail planning and development and provides insight on particular issues through success and failure in the cases studied.

Successful trail development includes broad-based citizen participation and visioning, development of public and private partnerships, and creation of a written implementation plan (Winterich and Ryan 1993). Trail development in Iowa is a local grassroots process beginning with citizens committees and community support. Early involvement produces a plan that people feel a part of, not something to which they feel they must react (Fiala 1999, 65). Partnering included citizens committees, county conservation boards, and public entities. According to Mark Ackelson, President of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, "Key elements of successful projects include well-defined and clear vision and plan, connections between communities and natural, cultural, and local attractions, strong support at the local level, and partnerships with and support of landowners, and public and private organizations and agencies." Effective plans bring together funding, land issues, politics, and public support (American Trails 2009).

In the projects studied, lack of comprehensive master planning resulted in conflict, changes, and delays. Conflicts with landowners may have been avoided through a process attentive to their interests and concerns. One-on-one contact between landowners and trail advocates is recommended. Changes in trail alignment and delays in construction may have been reduced with a written document articulating the complete vision for the project. A slow and deliberative process promotes acceptance and compromise. Adherence to construction priorities and sequencing of funding would have resulted in contiguous development and fewer interruptions during implementation. Without a master plan, trail development may be influenced by subjective interests and changing conditions.

Creating desirable linkages among natural, historical, and cultural resources is important for regional destination trails. Priority criteria are needed to determine the most favorable connections. The core of trail planning is to satisfy a user's desire for a specific type of trail experience (MDNR 2006, 1.1). In the 1989 Iowa Recreational Trails Usage Study, user enjoyment is enhanced through landscape variety, presence of water, separation from roadway, and historical markers. According to the Minnesota State Trail Use summary, the natural resources surrounding a trail system are the most important factor influencing use by tourists from more than 90 miles away. Preferences indicate a natural setting in quiet surroundings that facilitates a general enjoyment of the outdoors, with emphasis on scenery,

wildlife, and beauty (MDNR 2000, 5). The fact that trails are off-road and exclude motorized vehicles is also important.

For tourist market trails, surface material and trail length are important considerations. The surface of the trail determines the types of users it will draw. The longer the hard-surfaced trail, the more time and money visitors spend, and the longer they are willing to travel for the experience. In the 1992 study, *The Impacts of Rails-Trails*, desirable trail characteristics include no motorized vehicles, natural surroundings, quiet settings, safe road crossings, smooth trail surfaces, and good maintenance (Moore et al. 1992, i). Economic development directors in Northeast Iowa report the primary reason tourists visit is to engage in activities related to water and natural resources including canoeing, fishing, camping, and biking (IDED April 2008).

Local trail projects face challenges in trail alignment, land acquisition, development costs, and maintenance. Many trails are completed in stages as community appreciation and support increases. Expansion and connectivity follow after incremental success. Trailheads should be located within small towns near business districts to concentrate economic impact and market the trail. Community capacity in lodging, dining, and entertainment services is an important consideration when connecting communities. The most reliable source of tourism development is to tap into existing markets in order to encourage longer stays and repeat visits (IDOT 2000, 16). Though these projects were initially developed for other reasons, tourism and economic development has become a primary objective to maximize community benefits.

As outlined in an Iowa publication, organizing economic development programs around trail recreation involves five major steps (IDOT 2000, 10-18). They include enlist citizen involvement, build a community identity, develop a marketing plan, choose an approach to economic development, and organize for implementation. Enlisting citizen involvement focuses on participation including attendance at meetings, input in planning, and creating objectives. Building a community identity includes assessing community character and visitor experience leading to development of a communitywide vision for the future. A marketing plan reflects consumer needs and promotes the benefits of the community to visitors. Economic development approaches include community development, tourism

development, and downtown revitalization. Implementation requires that organizational, technical, and financial resources are in place. Potential benefits may be estimated through an economic impact analysis that evaluates impacts from trail construction, direct spending by trail users, and indirect impacts resulting from trail use (IDOT 2000, 19).

The potential for trail development is a complex question involving multiple dimensions. These dimensions include physical, social, and financial parameters. Quality natural resources and a natural setting increase appeal to trail users. Community interest and support for trails reflect resident values and public priorities. Funding resources determine if a trail plan can be implemented. In the WGWLT, landowner opposition and limited resources delayed completion. In the PFRT, restricted public participation decreased community support and ownership. For these two trails, the presence of an abandoned rail line determined the trail route. Though it reduced time and cost in establishing the trail alignment, it constrained the location and connection of resource features. In the TRT, extensive planning and public participation resulted in a dynamic project supported throughout the community. Location in a single community simplified political concerns. In each project, local issues and community history impacted trail planning and development. Acknowledging these impacts may have helped guide planning efforts.

Issues

For each project, specific factors exerted influence in the chronology and progress of trail development. Issues relevant in this study include landowner opposition, funding coordination, timeliness, and master planning.

Landowner opposition to trail projects is an important concern. Opposition may result in alternative alignments and increased project cost. Landowner concerns are similar across projects and include loss of privacy, liability, vandalism, noise, and litter. In most trails, these concerns do not materialize and disappear as the trail matures. Landowner concerns tend to be exaggerated prior to development and diminish after the trail is built (Kaylen et al 1993). Direct and repeated contact with landowners is the best way to resolve concerns and avoid conflict. Conducting face-to-face meetings with landowners builds trust, shows genuine concern, and adds a human dimension (Flink et al 2001, 43). Contacts made by community volunteers are more effective than those made by agency representatives due to personal

trust. Recreation use statutes in 49 states protect landowners from liability where public recreational use is allowed on private land (Tom Neenan, personal communication).

Funding can be the greatest obstacle in trail development. Many public funding sources require evidence of commitment and cooperation among public and private entities. Every trail has an advocate, whether it is an individual, group, agency, or government. The combination of organization, funding, and advocacy are critical for successful completion of any trail project. For continuity and efficiency, a single individual or entity is needed to coordinate funding contacts, requirements, and deadlines. Funding for maintenance and operations is problematic for many trails. Annual routine maintenance for a seasonal trail is estimated at $1,500 per mile and $2,000 per mile for a year round trail (IDOT 2001, 7-11).

Timeliness is very important in trail planning and development. If a project is delayed, development pressure, ownership changes, and increased costs may jeopardize completion. In the WGWLT, landowner concerns increased during development causing some to withdraw commitments to sell land or provide easements. In the TRT, the construction of a Super Walmart increased land values causing landowners to withdraw prior commitments. Economic, political, and social issues affect all projects and may determine success or failure. The state of the economy, changes in political administration and policy, and allocation of public funds affect trail development. Providence and luck also impact trail success.

Master planning is a rational and comprehensive process where multiple perspectives and alternatives are fully considered. A trail master plan translates the vision and conceptual idea into physical form and details program components (MDNR 2006, 1.13). The plan includes site assessments, trail alignment, amenity locations, construction phases, cost estimates, and funding sources (Flink et al 2000, 30). In Northeast Iowa, trail development has been a locally driven process with projects completed incrementally. Phased implementation coincides with community resources and capital financing in local governments. The coordinating agency brings unique resources to the master planning process. In Minnesota, many trails were developed through a state level master planning process with limited local involvement. This strategy expedited implementation and resolved funding issues; however, it compromised community participation, support, and ownership. Though the optimal trail

planning process is debatable, simultaneous involvement of local and regional entities in master planning and project implementation is valuable. Master planning requires greater commitment at the beginning and usually results in broader public participation, fewer changes during implementation, and a higher quality final product.

5.3 Reflections

Regional trails are an important tool for enhancing recreational opportunities, improving quality of life, offering transportation alternatives, and providing economic development. In Iowa, the resource corridors along rivers, railroads, and utility lines provide excellent opportunities for public recreation. Trails provide multiple benefits to individuals and communities which generally increase through time. These include accessible recreation, health and fitness, quality of life, habitat protection, ecological services, environmental and open space preservation, and tourism and economic development. In Northeast Iowa, trail advocates are interested in connecting local projects into a regional trail system for tourism and economic development. Tourist destination trails seek economic development through expansion, retention, and creation of business, job creation and development, and increase in tourism revenue. Communities in Northeast Iowa recognize the value of a regional trail as a competitive and complementary recreational resource to other Iowa trails and the Minnesota trail system.

In regional trail planning and development, various factors must come together in sufficient levels and at the proper time. These include public support, landowner cooperation, organizational coordination, and financial resources. Project dynamics are influenced by social, economic, political, and geographical contexts. The environmental movement, demand for recreation, and railroad abandonment inspired the rails-to-trails movement. Development of Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plans promoted the development of trails and led to creation of the Iowa Statewide Recreational Trails Plan. Changes in federal transportation policy and agency funding programs encouraged development of multi-modal systems including trails. Following these events, local trail planning and development increased throughout the state. Trail potential is influenced by a variety of physical, social, and financial factors. The projects in this study were the result of

local actors pursuing specific objectives for community betterment. In the past twenty years, conditions have been favorable for development of multi-use trails in Northeast Iowa.

This study investigated why and how three local trail projects evolved to become regional destination trails. Future research may focus on the role of trail committees, effects on communities connected, area economic development impacts, regional planning processes, organizational forces in trail development, and further exploration of themes and issues identified in this study. Quantitative issues related to trail statistics, user studies, and measures of success may also be investigated once these local trails become part of a regional trail system.

5.4 Closing Vignette: Regional Rendezvous

In celebration of summer, a large group of cyclists in Ames travel to Northeast Iowa to experience the Iowa Bluff Country Trail system, affectionately known to Iowans as the "we have it all" trail network. Traveling 140 miles to Mitchell County, we begin at the Minnesota state line on the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail. A few people head north along the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota. Traveling on the smooth asphalt surface, we glide past wind turbines and Amish farms, appreciating modern technology and traditional lifestyles. Over the Wapsipinicon River and through Pinicon Alders to Lake Hendricks we go. We stop by a prairie restoration to take photographs and enjoy a picnic lunch at the Welcome Center in Riceville.

Riding parallel along the highway to Cresco, we visit downtown shops and historic sites in Beadle Park. Some take a short spur along the Prairie Springs Recreational Trail to Vernon Springs Park. Further east, we enter the watershed ridgeline of the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail. A few people head north to the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail in Minnesota. Viewing crop and livestock farms, the undulating landscape is like a ruffled quilt, blocks of green stitched together with prairie, hedgerow, and woodland. We stop at an interpretive loop featuring railroad signage enroute to Calmar. Choosing among multiple spurs, some go for a swim at the outdoor public pool, others visit the Bily Clocks Museum in Spillville, and a few ride to Fort Atkinson State Preserve.

The next day we ride northeast along a rail-trail to Decorah. Traveling south along the Trout Run Trail, we travel though through ravines and woodlands. At Siewers Spring, we tour the fish hatchery. Following the creek amidst fields and prairie, we reach Bowspring Park. Some enjoy a rest break while others explore the river bank. Traveling into town, we follow the levee along the Upper Iowa River. Recreation opportunities include canoeing on the river, mountain biking in the bluffs, or hiking to area viewpoints. In the afternoon, some visit main street shops while others take a stroll at Luther College. Lodging options include hotels, bed and breakfasts, or camping at the city campground. The next day we visit museums and historic sites in and around Decorah. A few hardy souls continue east to Effigy Mounds National Park and the Mississippi River Trail.

Thankful that we have experienced the area's quality of life and contributed to its economic development, we head back home to rest our weary bodies though our minds are refreshed. And yes, we will come back again and stay longer the next time. The trip has been another great experience exploring the natural, historical, and cultural resources of Iowa. See Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 for images of our trail experience.

Figure 5.1 Prairie Visions on the Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail.

Figure 5.2 Rural landscape of the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail.

Figure 5.3 The scenery along the creek on the Trout Run Trail.

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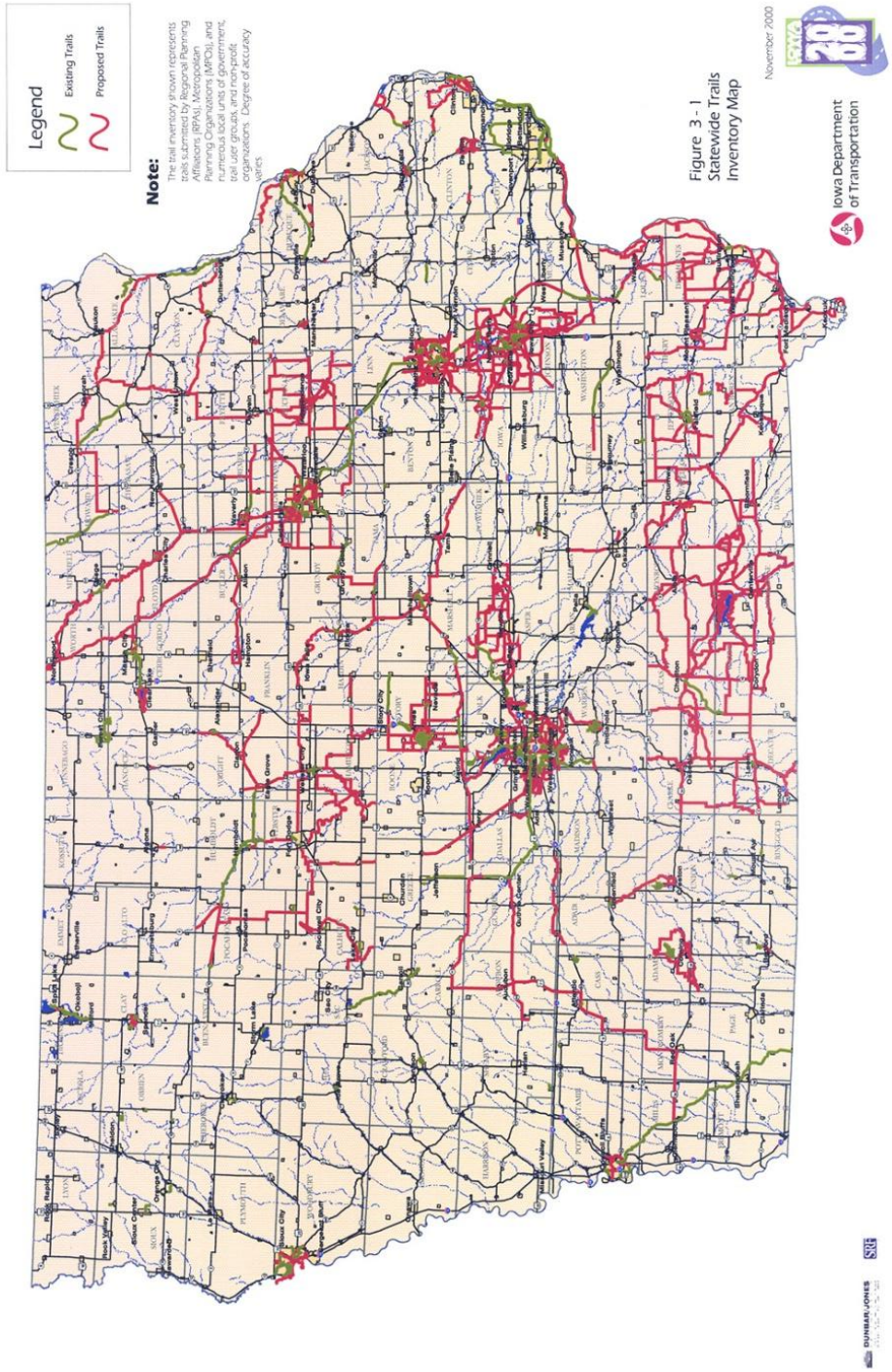
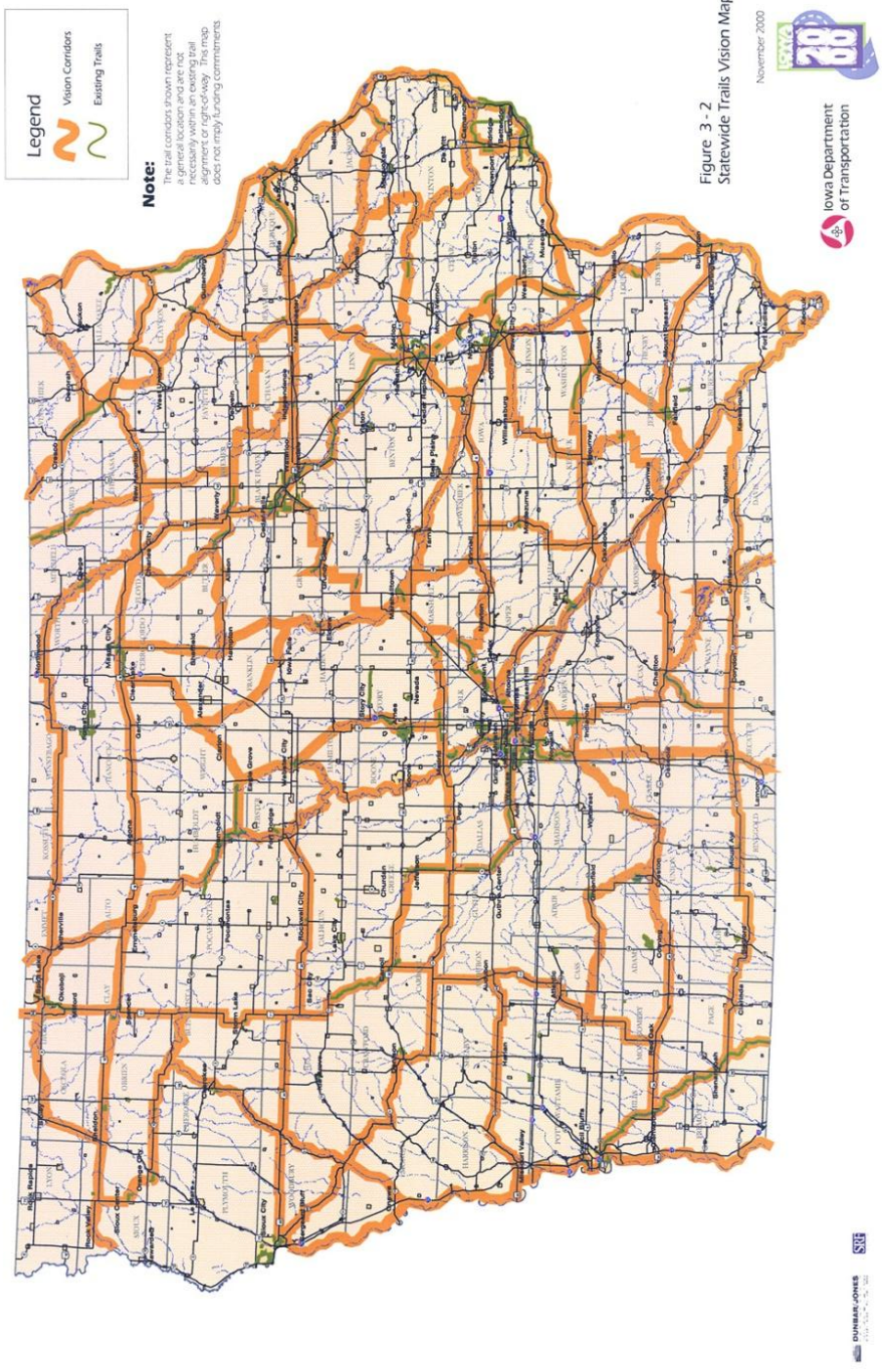
APPENDIX 1: Statewide Trails Inventory Map



Source: Iowa Department of Transportation, 2000, http://www.iowadot.gov/iowabikes/trails/CHPT03.HTML.

APPENDIX 2: Statewide Trails Vision Map



Source: Iowa Department of Transportation, 2000, http://www.iowadot.gov/iowabikes/trails/CHPT03.HTML.

APPENDIX 3: List of General Interviewees

General Interviewees (17)

Baier, Charlie. Iowa State University Extension. Cresco, IA. Personal visit. July 7, 2009.

Balk, Brenda. Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Decorah, IA. Personal visit. March 16, 2009.

Blommer, Craig. Area Supervisor, Parks and Trails Division, Minnesota Department of Natural Resource. Rochester, MN. Telephone call. June 2, 2009.

Edwards, Mark. State Trails Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Des Moines, IA. Telephone call. June 9, 2009.

Engelhardt, Tim. Executive Director, Clayton County Conservation Board. Elkader, IA. Telephone call. June 23, 2009.

Flora, Cornelia Butler. Professor, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University. Ames, IA. Telephone call. July 22, 2009.

Friest, Lora. Coordinator, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.. Postville, IA. Telephone calls and personal visit. June 6, July 9, and August 8, 2009.

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Hein, Lisa. Planning Director, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Des Moines, IA. Telephone call and email communication. June 8, 2009.

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Marlatt, Rod. Executive Director, Fayette County Conservation Board. Fayette, IA. Telephone call. June 26, 2009.

Mihm-Herold, Wendy. Executive Director, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission. Postville, IA. Telephone call. June 26, 2009.

Neenan, Tom. Executive Director, Iowa Trails Council. Centre Point, IA. Telephone call. June 15, 2009.

Ranum, Brenda. Program Director, Winneshiek County, Iowa State University Extension. Decorah, IA. Personal visit. July 10, 2009.

Santizo, Alaina. Program Manager, Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism Program. Des Moines, IA. Personal visit. July 16, 2009.

Schroeder, Barb. Executive Director, Winneshiek County Conservation Board. Fort Atkinson, IA. Personal visit. March 16, 2009.

Slifka, Spiff. Director, Cresco Chamber of Commerce. Cresco, IA. Personal visit. July 7, 2009.

APPENDIX 4: Interview Protocol

Project/Trail: Date:
Interviewee: Time:
Position: Place:
Contact Information:

Introduction

My name is Nicholas Meyer and I am a graduate student at Iowa State University. I am pursuing a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning. I am researching the process of multi-use trail planning and development in Northeast Iowa. Participation in the project is voluntary and you may decline to answer any question asked. Responses will be summarized and names of individuals will not be included in the results. May I have your consent to continue the interview?

Questions

1. What is the history/timeline of the trail's development?

2. What was the primary motivation/purpose for creating the trail?

3. What strategy was used to develop awareness for the trail's development?

4. What influences - people, organizations, and events - affected planning of the trail?

5. What were the major sources of support and opposition for the trail?

6. How does what exists today differ from the original vision or physical plan for the trail?

7. How do you measure the trail's success?

8. What written documentation/plan exists for the trail?

9. Who would you recommend for further information regarding the trail?

APPENDIX 5: List of Case Interviewees

Case Interviews (11)

Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail (3)

Agency representative
Committee member
Committee member

Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail (3)

Agency representative
Agency representative
Committee member

Trout Run Trail (5)

Agency representative
Agency representative
Agency representative
Committee member
Committee member

APPENDIX 6: Participant Interview Data

Case 1: Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail (WGWLT)

Question 1: What is the history/timeline of the trail's development?

Respondent 1: In 1989, the railroad was not profitable anymore and was facing abandonment. Railroad right-of-way was sold off by Mitchell County supervisors though they were not required to sell it back to the landowners. Great Western Railroad owned it as fee simple title with no reversionary rights. Committee paid back taxes owed by railroad and gave the title to Mitchell County. "This is a great example of the best in grass-roots activity". In Howard County, landowners were asked to attend a board of supervisors meeting regarding the railroad right-of-way. Harold Chapman, Howard County Conservation Board Director, helped organize the meeting. From Acme to Elma in Howard County, committee contacted landowners about use of railroad land for the trail. A regional enhancement grant was written to lime screen a five-mile section of trail. In the late 1980's, the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) issued the Statewide Trail Plan which included the Wapsipinicon River Corridor for its river and railroad assets. Milton Owen, Mitchell County Conservation Board Director, was contacted to investigate the possibilities of creating a trail. The Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail Association committee began in 1990 as an informal group with the focus of assisting the county conservation boards in Howard and Mitchell counties. The committee has contacted landowners, raised money, grubbed trees, paved the surface, and built the trail. Many people have been involved for reasons including a common bond of friendship, desire to be supportive, and the greater good. The committee generally has 20-25 active members and 20-25 in-kind supporters. Local residents had memories of walking to school and forbidden walks along the railroad bed. Lloyd Jenison walked along the railroad bed with his cane in an effort to get close to the land. On October 18, 2009, instrumentalist John McCutcheon, will perform "Step by Step" to benefit the trail. This corresponds to the historical development of the WGWLT, a step by step process.

Respondent 2: The vision for the trail began 19 years ago with local resident Elaine Govern. She visited with friends about it and formed a volunteer committee. The goal was to build a bike trail from Riceville to Lake Hendricks. The committee talked to landowners about the section of railroad bed that remained in place. Following completion of this section, there was interest in expanding the trail to McIntire. A grant was written and funds received to acquire the land and develop the trail. The committee worked closely with the Mitchell County Conservation Board. The trail was extended to the state line. This section remains gravel due to the fact that a 25-year lease was signed, six years remain, and the landowner has not agreed to sell the land. There is interest in connecting to the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota, four miles from the state line. The WGWLT trail has been hard-surfaced in recent years. Land has been purchased to eliminate the sections which require travel on the road. Traffic has at least doubled since the trail was hard-surfaced. The trail extends south to Elma and the committee is still involved in purchasing land and writing grants. The historic

Riceville Baptist Church has been converted into a Welcome Center and is used extensively for community events. The trail committee maintains the Welcome Center while the county conservation board owns the trail.

Respondent 3: The trail began as a concept in 1990. Grants and funds were collected in 1991 and 1992. Construction began in 1993. The trail continued to progress and in the early 2000's, the Riceville Baptist Church was added as a Welcome Center. In Mitchell County, eight miles are asphalted with two and three-quarter miles scheduled in the next year. There are four miles from the state line to the Shooting Star Trail in Minnesota but nothing is actively being done to complete the connection.

Question 2: What was the primary motivation /purpose for creating the trail?

Respondent 1: The goals were to save native prairie, wildlife habitat, and butterfly species.

Respondent 2: The goal was to provide recreation for the local people and the wider area.

Respondent 3: Primary motivation was initiated by a citizen's volunteer group involving dozens of people. Elaine Govern and others had the vision for the trail and raised tens of thousands of dollars. The county conservation board owns and maintains the trail. In 2005, Stan Walk, member of the Mitchell County Board of Supervisors, worked on a federal earmark of $2.3 million dollars. Committee later applied for a Community Attraction and Tourism grant of $1.3 million dollars. The early need was for a trail from Riceville to Lake Hendricks. Additional pieces of the old railroad bed were still in place from Riceville to the state line and this led to future expansion of the trail.

Question 3: What strategy was used to develop awareness for the trail's development?

Respondent 1: Awareness included meetings, calls, and newspaper articles in the *Riceville Recorder*. A series highlighting the trail's progress was featured on the front page. Moved two historic bridges, involved the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and kept people informed.

Respondent 2: Awareness was created by word of mouth and through friends of the committee. The newspaper was very supportive. Elaine Govern does a lot of promotion through attendance of various meetings and involvement in local and regional organizations. There is a general brochure of the trail. Campers at Lake Hendricks spread knowledge of the trail and half the campers have bicycles. The committee held meetings and the county conservation board became involved.

Respondent 3: Public meetings were held by the committee. The county conservation board held meetings relating to land acquisition. Weekly articles on the trail's progress on various issues appeared in the local newspaper. These articles helped promote the trail. There was a high level of local publicity.

Question 4: What influences – people, organizations, and events – affected planning of the trail?

Respondent 1: Greatest one's occurred if they were blocked – not going there – committee did not look for opposition and found alternatives. Committee contacted private landowners to connect the trail through timber and farmland. If something was offered, the committee may take advantage of it. Hunters resented the trail's creation as it would prevent them from hunting along the railroad corridor. In Amish Country, greater sensitivity is needed regarding land valuation, trail alignment, and cultural traditions. Other influences included bridge crossing costs and contract reserve program (CRP) contract issues.

Respondent 2: There are various recreational events on the trail. Trail planning and expansion just slowly developed over time. There was interest in drawing people from outside the area and a need to draw people to the trail as a destination. The Howard County Conservation Board was active in developing the trail from Riceville to Elma. Elaine Govern was good at writing grants and getting assistance from Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development.

Respondent 3: Volunteers had a vision for the trail and its potential benefits. Other things were integrated into the trail over time. The Riceville Baptist Church was going to be dissolved and became the Welcome Center. The trail could not realize full benefits until it was hard-surfaced. The powers that be realized that it had to be paved and go somewhere. Going somewhere refers to connecting communities and having an end destination. Grant funds made paving and expansion possible. Economic benefits are beginning to accrue – people are coming from a distance away, calls to the county conservation board office are increasing, and local events are being held. It is not yet a regional trail but has some unique features including modern and Amish lifestyles and is something of a twilight zone with wind turbines producing alternative energy. Regarding land acquisition, some railroad land reverted back to the county due to back taxes. Private landowners had purchased and developed sections of the railroad bed. Whenever the railroad right-of-way was not available, an alternative route was sought. The committee had decided to secure trail alignment only from willing sellers. Due to state law, condemnation is not allowed for trails.

Question 5: What were the major sources of support and opposition to the trail?

Respondent 1: Opposition included "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) issues - there was lots of controversy in the early 1990's. Concerns included beer parties, trash, condoms, and the like.

Respondent 2: There was opposition in the town of McIntire even to the point of petitions. The mayor of McIntire was and still is a vocal opponent and opposes establishment of a trailhead in town. His father owns a portion of the railroad bed. Many opponents have come around to support the trail over time. Apprehension about litter and motorcycle groups has disappeared. Many opponents are now users of the trail. Community support is strong at fund-raising functions.

Respondent 3: Support has been pretty strong across the county and in Riceville. "It is not a government trail; it is a community derived idea and project." The county conservation board provides backbone structure for trail development. Opposition originated from a poor perception of trails by some people. "They did not need a trail coming through their backyard or government spending money on it." Opposition never became so extreme to the point of burning bridges as occurred on some trails.

Question 6: How does what exists today differ from the original vision or physical plan of the trail?

Respondent 1: The vision was to stand on the Minnesota and Iowa border and look north to the Shooting Star Trail and south to the southeast corner of Iowa. The WGWLT would be the first interstate connection to the Southern Minnesota Area Recreational Trails (SMART). Future plans included an easterly connection along A46 to Ridgeway. The trail will be 33 miles in length from the state line to Elma when completed.

Respondent 2: The trail started small and simply evolved. We really just wanted to go from Riceville to Lake Hendricks. The trail's development was a gradual process that happened slowly.

Respondent 3: The trail doesn't differ a whole lot. We didn't know what the connections would be as some railroad pieces were not available and alternative routes were found.

Question 7: How do you measure the trail's success?

Respondent 1: A local resident has completed three paintings of scenes along the WGWLT. One measure is the enjoyment and peace that the trail provides. According to one resident, the trail is "the best thing that has happened to our town." People who once opposed the trail project now use the trail. The trail is a community resource and committee members feel as if they have touched the future.

Respondent 2: No particular instrument has been used to measure success. Trail use has increased since it was hard-surfaced. Newspapers from Mason City, Osage, and Cresco have written articles about the trail. The following day after the Mason City article, half-dozen retirees came to use the trail.

Respondent 3: The trail is very successful.

Question 8: What written documentation/plan exists for the trail?

Respondent 1: Future plans include the Vision Iowa grant, $1.3 million with $560,000 matching funds. Federal earmark funds have been requested by the congressional representative. Persistence and community support have been key.

Respondent 2: Not sure that any plan exists for the trail. There is a master plan for state trails from the Iowa Department of Transportation. Mitchell County and the county conservation board may have plans which include the trail.

Respondent 3: There are many three-ring binders of trail documentation including notes with landowners, construction documents, and project details. The county engineer prepares documents and the Iowa Department of Transportation handles the bid letting. The trail corridor was recognized in the state trails network many years ago.

Question 9: Who would you recommend for further information regarding the trail?

Respondent 1: Stanley and Sharlene Milewsky, committee members; Milton Owen, Mitchell County Conservation Board Director; and Harold Chapman, Howard County Conservation Board Director.

Respondent 2: Elaine Govern, committee member, and Milton Owen, Mitchell County Conservation Board Director.

Respondent 3: Elaine Govern, committee member.

Case 2: Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail (PFRT)

Question 1: What is the history/timeline of the trail's development?

Respondent 1: The trail was created 20 years ago after Winneshiek County purchased the railroad right-of-way in 1984. The rail bed was owned by the Milwaukee Road Railroad. Close to the same time, an Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) trails systems advisory board was formed. Mark Johnson, a cross-country skier, avid athlete, and English teacher was involved. Trails of regional significance were identified and included the trail corridors for the future Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail and Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail. In the early 1990's, the rail was surfaced with lime screenings. No construction regulations existed at that time and the county worked with IDOT on technical specifications in accordance with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Trail development involves five stages: local work to plan and form ideas, securing grants for implementation, incremental success in the form of intermediate steps, expand community and public awareness, and complete additional pieces to form a regional or long-distance network. It is a good process and takes time, especially for the manager. An extended period of time resolves problems and may result in better alternatives. Outside funding from state and federal sources creates more loops and processes to go through. "If you use their money, then you have to follow their rules. Costs more in the long run but results in a better product." All county conservation board directors agree that the process could be streamlined.

Respondent 2: The railroad section from Calmar to Lime Springs was abandoned in 1978. Winneshiek County bought the section located within their jurisdiction which became the Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail. The PFRT began as a lime screened trail. The Prairie Springs Recreational Trail connects the city of Cresco with Vernon Springs and the Turkey River. A local trail group formed in 1999 and raised $600,000 in 10 years. After the PSRT was completed, the trail committee advocated paving of the PFRT. A total of $1.3 million was needed for asphalting. Funding included a $600,000 CAT grant along with federal funds. Money was raised in 18 months among the two counties (Howard and Winneshiek) and three communities (Cresco, Ridgeway, and Calmar). The trail is currently in repair after heavy rains and flooding.

Respondent 3: Trails were a fairly new concept in Iowa. The Dubuque Heritage Trail and the Waterloo and Cedar Rapids trails were in progress. While in graduate school, I became familiar with the Elroy-Sparta Trail in Wisconsin and am personally interested in the greenbelt or multi-use corridor in north central Iowa along the Shell Rock River. The rail bed from Calmar to Cresco was abandoned by the Milwaukee Road Railroad which went broke and reorganized as the CMC Corporation. A spur from Conover to Decorah was also abandoned. Conover is no longer a town but is where the Cargill Corporation began. The county conservation board was interested in trails but some local attorneys opposed the trail. The Winneshiek County Conservation Board put in a bid for the whole section of right-or-way located in the county. Individual landowners bid for select parcels but the county's bid was accepted due to the ease of dealing with one versus many entities. The current trail follows the rail bed except in the town of Ridgeway where parcels had been sold off. Future plans include creating a trail from Conover to Decorah and from Cresco to Harmony, Minnesota. The trail committee, Trails of Winneshiek (TOW) may be better able to deal with landowners through personal contact.

Question 2: What is the primary motivation/purpose for creating the trail?

Respondent 1: The intended use of the rail bed was for trail development and as a natural resource corridor. The trail serves as part of a regional trail system with local committees involved in trail expansion. Iowa trails are local driven as compared to Minnesota trails which are state driven, and there are more but shorter trails in Iowa. A regional trail system was the goal even at the start and began with small increments. Economic development has been a thrust in the past 20 years and trails are a part of this.

Respondent 2: The original purpose was for local recreational use with tourism as a secondary goal. For the PSRT, there was the issue of safety as children were riding their bicycles from town to the Turkey River. Physical fitness was also a factor as the city recently built a fitness center.

Respondent 3: The county conservation board responded favorably to the idea of a recreational trail. Ecological components were secondary and economic development was also considered.

Question 3: What strategy was used to develop awareness for the trail's development?

Respondent 1: The Pave the Way committee was formed with the single focus of paving the existing lime screened trail. "People like to be part of a good project, good projects sell themselves, and people have to get used to the idea." The timing makes sense with public awareness of health and obesity issues.

Respondent 2: The three communities of Cresco, Ridgeway, and Calmar worked together to pave the trail through the Pave the Way campaign. The county conservation board director led the group's activity. Fund-raising included naming options, mile markers, bike racks, and bike shelters.

Respondent 3: Individuals to assist with the project were selectively chosen because of their support for the trail. Information was not made public until absolutely necessary. A committee was formed including representatives from various groups. Trail discussion included what uses and how to build it. The name Prairie Farmer was picked by the county conservation board from a contest advertised on WHO Radio in Des Moines. Opposition groups did not show up to the meetings.

Question 4: What influences – people, organizations, and events – affected planning of the trail?

Respondent 1: Public support drives the trail system. They begin as small trails to a local destination and then on to another destination. Dreams start small and have expanded to create a regional destination trail. Future plans involve connecting to the Minnesota trail system from Cresco to Harmony. Howard County is big on snowmobile trails and part of a four county regional system. The idea of trails has a long history. The City of Cresco has an annual "Snowfest." In forming committees, select people for credibility as people make the difference. The nature of the committee dictates fund-raising: big pocket access and recreation oriented folks. Members must be willing to do their share of the work.

Respondent 2: The Blufflands Trail in Minnesota has been a major influence. Residents looked at Lanesboro's main street revenues and growth curve trends from 1977-2003. From 1977- 1983, revenues were at $4 million. From 1991-1999, they increased from $11 to $18 million. This coincided with trail paving and extension. Locals concluded that the trail must be paved and must have sufficient length. From Cresco to Calmar, the trail is a tourism attraction. What is the hook? An historical looking main street even as uses change over time. Food and dining establishments and stores for shopping. Main Street as a social place and attraction for bringing new people to town.

Respondent 3: The Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Council had to prepare a regional plan several years ago as required by the IDOT. Regional cooperation among the county conservation boards is great. The ISTEA and T-21 funds were important for implementation. Rick Edwards and Decorah Parks and Recreation were helpful. The Trails of Winneshiek (TOW) may have a role in completing the trail from Conover to Decorah. The Root River

State Trail user study and economic development impacts influenced trail development in Iowa. Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development has been extensively involved since Lora Friest became director. Unique contributions have been made by individuals and their respective organizations including committees, county conservation boards, and regional organizations. The county conservation board system is unique to Iowa and is involved in many types of resource conservation activities. In Northeast Iowa, Allamakee County has been the least responsive due to conservative residents and large percentage of publicly owned land that is tax exempt.

Question 5: What were the major sources of support and opposition for the trail?

Respondent 1: Community support for tourism, recreation, and bicycling – multiple benefits. Some were skeptical originally but are willing to listen now. Personal preference among the public ultimately prevails. Concerns included vandalism, litter, motorcycle groups, and criminal activity. One needs to be smart about the alignment to prevent such problems. The trail is a local driven project and the community is amenable now. Compared to then and now, things have changed. Trail proximity is an asset. Trail development is a neighbor to neighbor process. Once built, trails are accepted, even liked; no different from the construction of a gravel road. Money is available to establish trails but little is available for repair and maintenance. "Landowners are generally not against trails, they just want them on someone else's property." The trails in Northeast Iowa will be for recreation and not for commuter use.

Respondent 2: Business leaders and city fathers in the community were very supportive. Opposition was minor and no public funds were used for the trail, only grants and donations.

Respondent 3: Landowners opposed the trail as they thought they owned the railroad right-of-way. The railroad had purchased the land and held the deed whereas some was taken by condemnation. County supervisors and the Farm Bureau opposed it. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation helped research the deeds to determine if they could be defended in court. A public meeting had created controversy – went to court – landowners versus the county conservation board. The railroad had purchased the land on a quitclaim deed versus a warranty deed. Opposition included issues of liability, crime, and vandalism. Fear of the unknown was primary. The Pave the Way committee expanded support for the trail. Eventually the mayor of Ridgeway became supportive as he owned a café. Time heals many wounds.

Question 6: How does what exists today differ from the original vision of physical plan for the trail?

Respondent 1: Interest as part of a regional trail network versus a local community trail. The Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) and Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development (NIRCD) recently met with county conservation board directors and county engineers to see where trails could be on a map.

Respondent 2: Expansion plans include an old railroad spur from Conover to Decorah for connection to the 10-mile loop trail in Decorah. The development of a 100-mile trail is being considered by the county economic development director. Only four to six trails in the country are that long. Connecting to the Preston-Harmony trail would make this a reality. Harmony wants to go to Niagara Cave, only two miles from Iowa. From Harmony to Cresco may be a $10 million dollar project. The two states are working together and Congressman Tom Latham is sponsoring an earmark. The Upper Iowa River was listed as one of the "Top 100 Scenic Areas" in National Geographic *Adventure* magazine.

Respondent 3: I did not fathom having it asphalt surfaced, the limestone screening is slower and asphalt is higher cost and maintenance. The trail has created awareness that trails are good and use has increased from bikers and walkers. At one time, it was groomed for cross-country skiers but not now. The court settlement excluded parcels from snowmobile use; only the section from Ridgeway to Cresco is snowmobile accessible.

Question 7: How do you measure the trail's success?

Respondent 1: The PRFT could become a destination trail as people travel through Northeast Iowa to various destinations. Trails must have distance and variety.

Respondent 2: "We exceeded our expectations; we really did get it done!" Things were in our favor, there was rapid support building, and there was a quick timetable. In Iowa, the process has worked as it should whereas in Minnesota the process is state driven. "A small community such as Cresco pulls together easier and the fund-raising ability is amazing!"

Respondent 3: Only by gut feeling. The five and ten year plans of the county conservation board included completion of user studies. Great benefit resulted from funding sources including Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP), recreational trails funds (IDOT), and response from legislators with grants and public support. The recreational trails fund was one of the first grant sources used for purchasing land and trail surfacing.

Question 8: What written documentation/plan exists for the trail?

Respondent 2: There really is no written documentation and economic stimulus was not a factor. The mayor met with folks in Lanesboro. A common question voiced by trail users in Minnesota was, "Is there another trail nearby?"

Question 9: Who would you recommend for further information regarding the trail?

Respondent 1: David Oestmann , former Winneshiek County Conservation Board Director; Alaina Santizo, Vision Iowa Program Manager; and Steve Bowman ,Iowa Department of Transportation Recreational Trails Program.

Respondent 2: John Heying, Calmar.

Respondent 3: Jim Bucheit, businessman and committee member, and Don Brazelton, Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards.

Case 3: Trout Run Trail (TRT)

Question 1: What is the history/timeline of the trail's development?

Respondent 1: In 1995, the Dug Road segment was completed. Formerly a closed road, the three-quarter mile trail connected the campground with the city. The second segment to be completed was 1.25 miles east of Dug Road along the flood control dike to Wold Park in 1997. This provided a recreational opportunity along the river and floodplain. Following these improvements, there was discussion of connecting to the fish hatchery from Bowstring Park on Highway 9. David Oestmann, Winneshiek County Conservation Board Director, applied for grants in the early 2000's. The Trails of Winneshiek (TOW) intervened and advocated for a more ambitious loop trail project. The trail is being completed in segments: seven are complete, two are in progress, and grant funding is being secured for three sections.

Respondent 2: The trail was completed in segments from a city park to the fish hatchery beginning about five years ago. Grants were written by Lora Friest, Director of Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development. Mike Huinker and David Bakken made all the landowner contacts.

Respondent 3: The trail has taken many different turns in design and construction. The Trails of Winneshiek focused on destinations and how to connect them, triggered the development of the final route, and contacted the property owners. Property owners were receptive people and total 24 for the project.

Respondent 4: In 1996, John Hjelle and others began considering options for a loop trail in Decorah. In 2002 and 2003, T-21 grants were applied for to pave the trail from Bowstring Park to the fish hatchery. This rekindled the idea of a loop trail among earlier advocates. On Labor Day in 2005, several committee members met with Andy Anderson, a Vision Iowa board member. A Vision Iowa CAT grant was applied for and awarded in April 2006. The park to hatchery section was doable for several reasons. These included value as an employee retention asset, function as a tourism attraction, and amenity for technology commuters. Roger Jensen from IDOT was interested in doing a feasibility study for a trail in Decorah but nothing materialized.

Respondent 5: Initially involved in a citizen's advocacy group. The PFRT benefited from the synergy of Calmar, Ridgeway, and Cresco and was paved with grant funds and local fund-raising. The Trails of Winneshiek focused on the alignment and funding of the Trout Run Trail project. TOW began in 2001, the mission statement is on the website, and the website includes a nine-minute DVD on the trail. I was personally involved in landowner alignment issues. A 28E maintenance agreement exists between the City of Decorah and the Winneshiek County Conservation Board. The trail includes asphalt and concrete surfaces.

Cooperating partners include the city, county conservation board, TOW, IDOT, IDNR (fisheries division), Vision Iowa (CAT grant), private citizens (raised $1.2 million), NIRCD, INHF (provided easement), community service organizations (Lions, Rotary), Trout Unlimited, Luther College, Farm Bureau, and Iowa Great Places (grant funds). Private landowners are the holy grail of the trail. Naming rights are a critical fund-raising effort.

Question 2: What is the primary motivation/purpose for creating the trail?

Respondent 1: The motivation was trail advocacy and increased tourism opportunities. The committee was led by bankers and businessmen who raised $1.3 million in funds.

Respondent 2: The goal of the trail system was to provide significant scenic value in combining amenities. These included the fish hatchery, Upper Iowa River, and trail alignment. Handicap access was a focus.

Respondent 3: Many communities think that a pot of gold exists among tourists. Smaller communities think differently as they have smaller budgets. Trails create excitement and can bring money not otherwise available. National emphasis on food and fitness helps as well.

Respondent 5: Utilized the IDOT trail-based economic development fact sheet and desired three primary benefits or impacts. The first was to attract free agents to the community. A free agent is a person who can move to any area and choose the place where they want to live. They may have an entrepreneurship objective and start a small business. Northeast Iowa, Luther College, and the City of Decorah have attractive resources for free agents and retirees. People are returning to Northeast Iowa and this is an economic motor for the community. Second is tourism. Though considered primary, it really is secondary. Third is quality of life. Coldwater trout fishing is a primary activity with 29 coldwater trout streams feeding the Upper Iowa River. The trail is a centerpiece for bringing all the benefits together. In addition, there are 19 miles of mountain bike trails. The TRT is a peripheral destination trail.

Question 3: What strategy was used to develop awareness for the trail's development?

Respondent 1: Awareness included open meetings, city council meetings, marketing group of the chamber of commerce, and a kick-off barbeque at the fish hatchery in 2006.

Respondent 2: Influential materials came from the Root River State Trail in Minnesota. This trail is the most similar to Northeast Iowa and the most successful trail in Minnesota.

Respondent 3: Public awareness has not kept up good enough and people have assumptions. The trail is half done with construction commitments on another quarter. Includes a dozen different funding sources along with locally raised funds.

Question 4: What influences – people, organizations, and events – affected planning of the trail?

Respondent 1: The sales tax revenue increase in Lanesboro, Minnesota. Lanesboro has benefited a lot regarding economic development associated with the trail. Regional discussion to connect existing trails is ongoing. Clayton County has applied for grants for a bridge across the Turkey River. The regional perspective has developed because of the Food and Fitness Initiative which began in March 2007. One of nine projects in the country, a $500,000 planning grant was awarded to five counties in Northeast Iowa. The project brought the counties together to discuss various issues including trails. "This type of cooperation had not existed previously and involved people from all components of society." The project was led by the Leopold Center, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, and Cooperative Extension. Future funds may be used for system and policy changes to promote active living communities. Working as a region improves competitiveness among grant applications. The project is expected to develop into a national model for rural food and fitness. Ann Mansfield of Luther College and Brenda Ranum of Cooperative Extension are the co-facilitators.

Respondent 2: In September 2005, a Vision Iowa board member attended a Labor Day picnic in which Trails of Winneshiek members were present. Hearing plans for the trail, he encouraged members to think bigger to include connecting not just to the fish hatchery but rather creation of a loop trail around the city. He challenged them to write a Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant. In December 2005, a $1.6 million dollar grant request was submitted. Lora Friest's involvement in grant writing, visioning, and planning made it happen. The Food and Fitness Initiative was also a factor. A grassroots effort of 6-8 folks helped raise the bulk of $1.2 million in funds. Kirk Johnson of Luther College's Development Office was helpful. The existing 22-mile mountain bike trail network was a supporting factor. In fact, TOW actually splintered off from the original bike trails group, Decorah Human Powered Trails.

Respondent 3: The regional Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI) stimulated desire to create trails in other counties and funds are now available. In years past, property owners wanted the land back. Receptivity and perception are greater now and fears have not been realized. The FFI is a unique group and is a mix of each county with different occupational perspectives. The success in Lanesboro, Minnesota has been a factor as well.

Respondent 4: The stars aligned at the right time following controversies over a Walmart Supercenter and east side school closings. People wanted a project to agree upon. The Food and Fitness Initiative was instrumental in developing regional cooperation. There is interest in connecting existing trails but there is not enough energy to do it now while the Trout Run Trail is still in progress. The greatest obstacle to trail development is getting the alignment coordinated, preferably by volunteers and not by agency representatives. Trust and passion are the difference.

Respondent 5: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources 83-page user study of nine major trails was useful for statistical data and trail planning. Easy slopes are important; four percent maximum in Minnesota and Iowa allows five percent. No rail beds were available for the Trout Run Trail.

Question 5: What were the major sources of support an opposition for the trail?

Respondent 1: There was little opposition to the trail and cooperation was excellent. TOW can work with private landowners better than a government entity due to personal connections and trust. The public was favorably optimistic, particularly after divisive issues of east side school closures and construction of a Walmart Supercenter. The trail project was a healing effort for the community.

Respondent 2: Opposition was limited and not vocal. The trail brought adversaries together and was the most unifying project in many years.

Respondent 3: "Trails are easy to gain public interest; sidewalks are not quite as interesting." The trail brought the community together. Fifteen to eighteen years ago, there was an issue of street repaving. Repaved downtown 12 years ago and this had a business impact. For this project, I changed my approach following the mayor's request to get together with the downtown group to discuss concerns. I invited communication and testimonial sharing from other communities. Construction involved the local government, county conservation board, parks and recreation, and city council. TOW was involved in fundraising and trail development.

Respondent 5: Opposition in the community was limited with some resistance from farmers along the railroad line. Alignment with landowners is the key to trail development. I personally visited with landowners, in private and many times, to gather feedback and input. They recognized the potential and 24 landowners were involved in the TRT. Farmland is a private affair. Negative feedback included fears of liability and vandalism. In 1998, a park ranger for the Sparta-Elroy Trail in Wisconsin commented that there have been no liability claims in 40 years.

Question 6: How does what exists today differ from the original vision of physical plan for the trail?

Respondent 2: The Trout Run Trail is a piece – now how do we market trails to local and tourist interests? It has become a destination trail connecting campground and tourist amenities of Ice Cave and Dunning's Spring Park. A regional trail generates tourism and economic development.

Respondent 3: Orchestration and location of funding. This project is broader and the variety of funding sources is greater. To facilitate construction, engineering, and property right-of-way, the trail project was divided into pieces. According to one committee member regarding the expanded project, "When we started, all we wanted was to ride to the fish hatchery."

Respondent 5: Trail development and expansion is a long-term planning process. Other communities will need to take the lead for connecting to existing trails. The Root River State Trail serves as a model for future planning.

Question 7: How do you measure the trail's success?

Respondent 1: Measures of success may include increases in tourism, hotel-motel taxes, and wintertime occupancy rates from cross-country skiing. The trail serves the local people for biking, fitness, and walking. Other trails include mountain bike trails.

Respondent 2: The amount of personal use and value as a local amenity. Bike shops are selling more bikes and people are being more active. Increased revenue from tourism and economic development. Mountain bike trails, water trails, scenic beauty, organic food, attractive town, and small town amenities – these are all measures of success. "Timing and luck are very important."

Respondent 5: "The project is a piece in the ribbon of trail in Northeast Iowa; an investment in our community." Resolved complex engineering issues in crossing the river multiple times. Variety of trail landscapes in a loop trail concept. Amenities include the trailheads, restrooms, Luther College, and dining establishments. Opportunities for water trail access, kayaking, mountain biking, and camping. Ample community activities for a 3-4 day weekend excursion. The trail is a $7.2 million dollar project.

Question 8: What written documentation/plan exists for the trail?

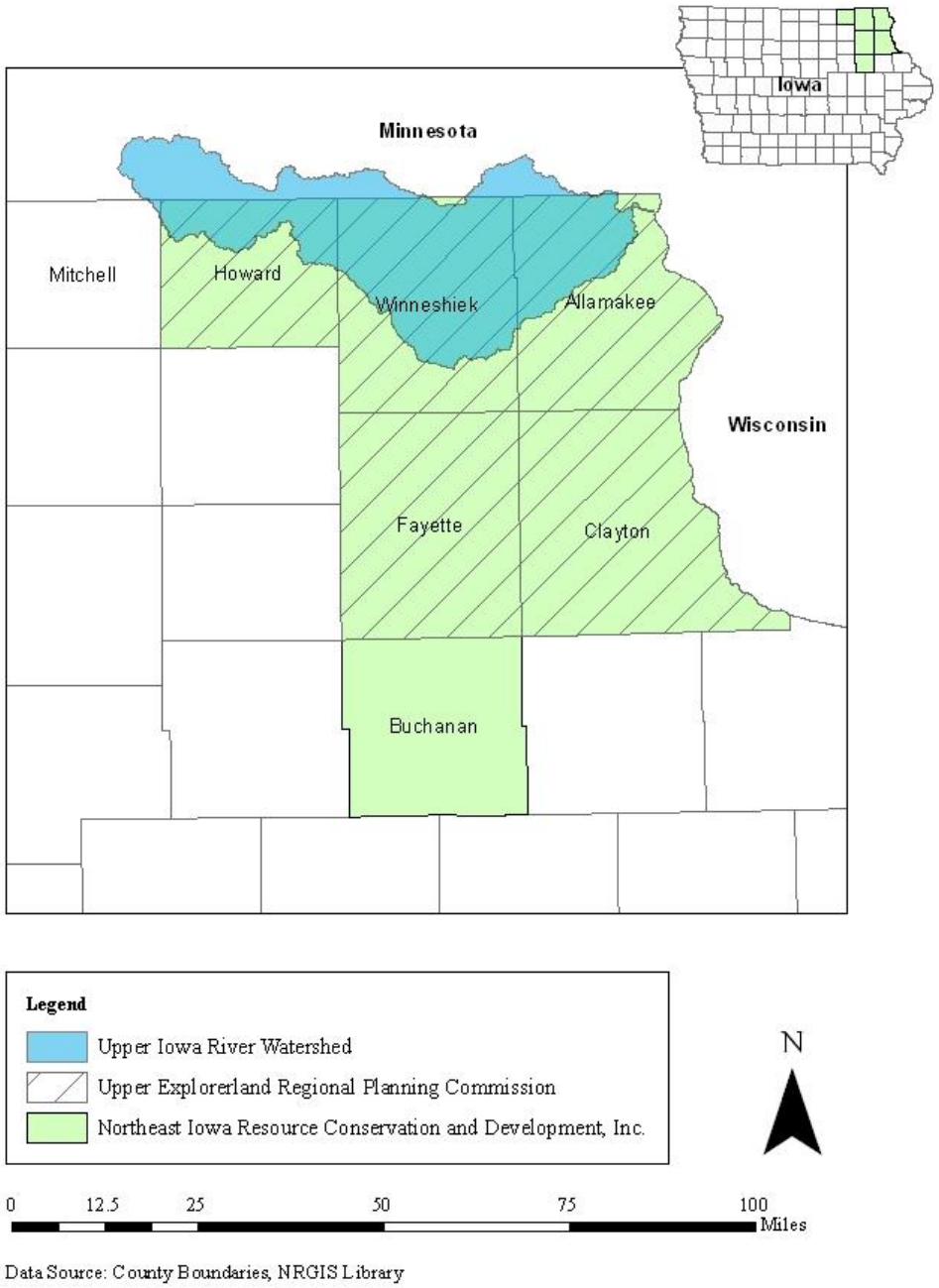
Question 9: Who would you recommend for further information regarding the trail?

Respondent 1: Lindsay Erdman, City Engineer, and Cathy Bakken, member of TOW and Parks and Recreation Board.

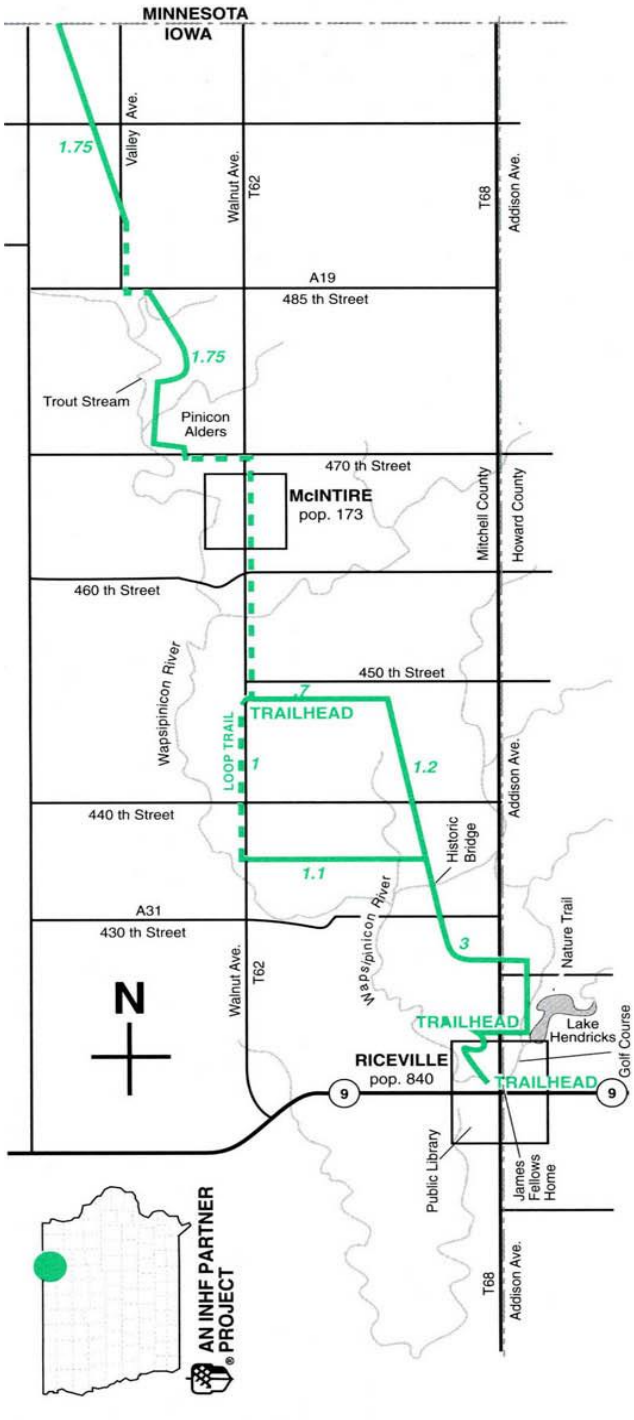
Respondent 2: Lindsay Erdman, City Engineer, was really the administrator tying the funding sources together and managing the project.

Respondent 5: David and Cathy Bakken, John Hjelle, Marty Grimm, Mike Harmon, and Harlan Satrom, members of TOW.

APPENDIX 7: Project Study Area Map

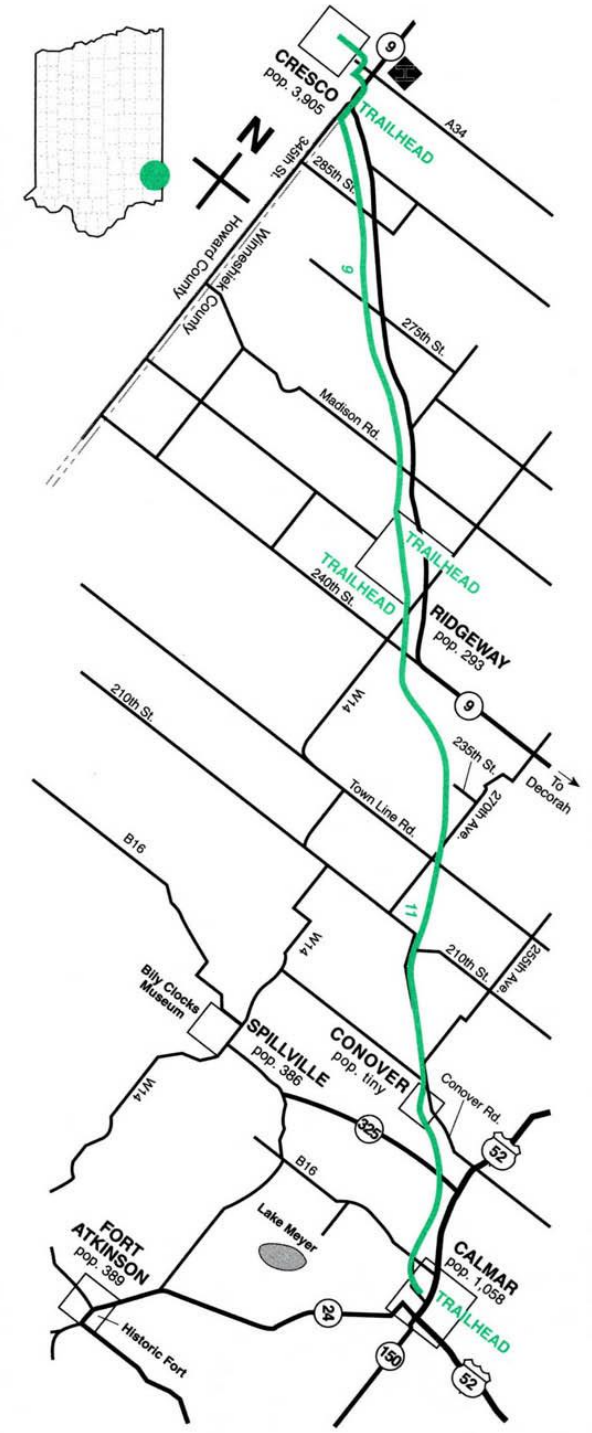


APPENDIX 8: Wapsi-Great Western Line Trail Map



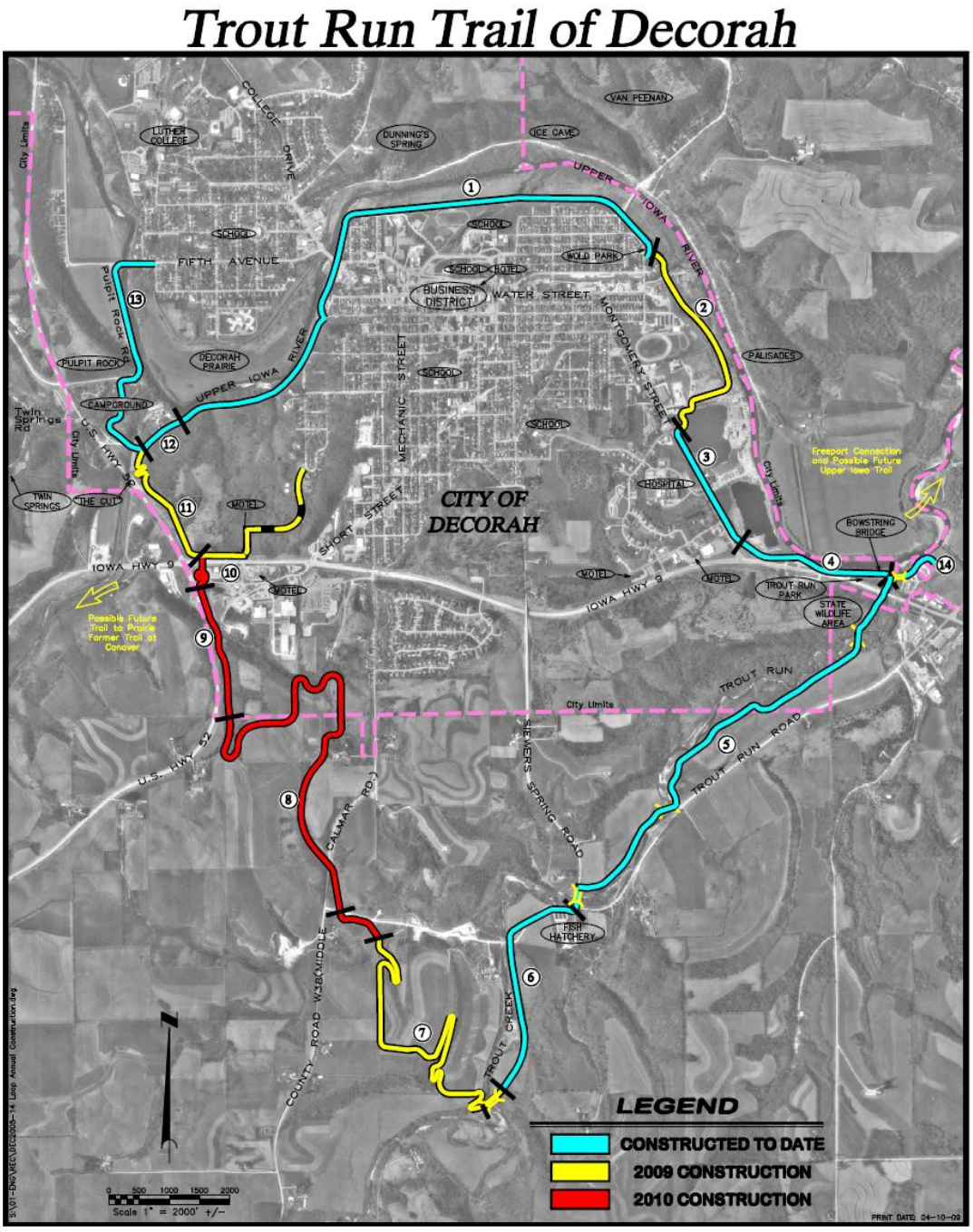
Source: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, 2001, http://www.inhf.org/iowatrails/wapsi-2001map.htm.

APPENDIX 9: Prairie Farmer Recreational Trail Map



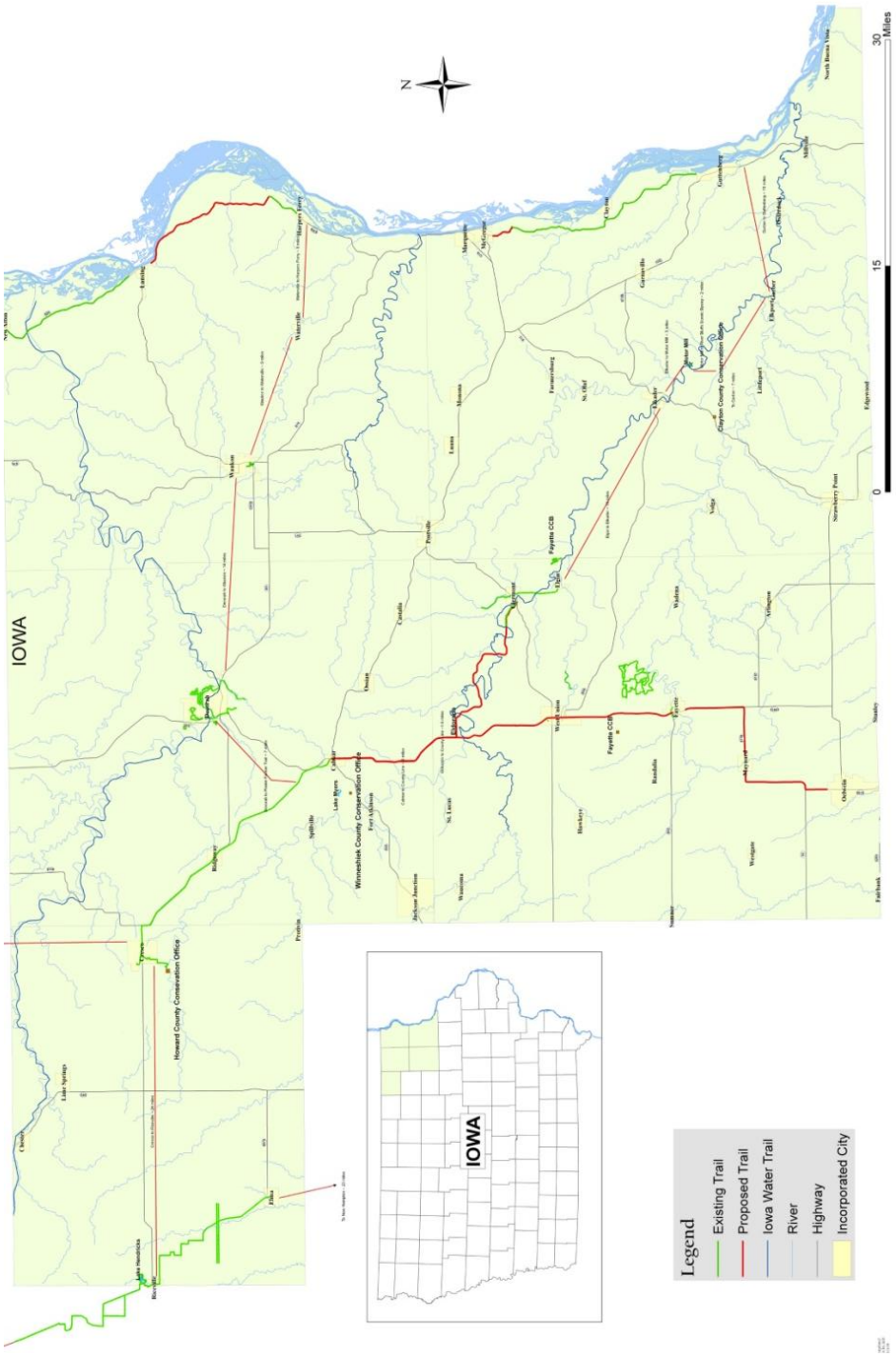
Source: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, 2001, http://www.inhf.org/iowatrails/prairie-2001map.htm.

APPENDIX 10: Trout Run Trail Map



Source: Trails of Winneshiek, 2009, http://www.trailsofwinneshiek.org/2009map.pdf.

APPENDIX 11: Northeast Iowa Regional Trails Map



Source: Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Inc., 2009.